

Among

My Books

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO




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WITH A PREFACE BY  
H. D. TRAILL, D.C.L.



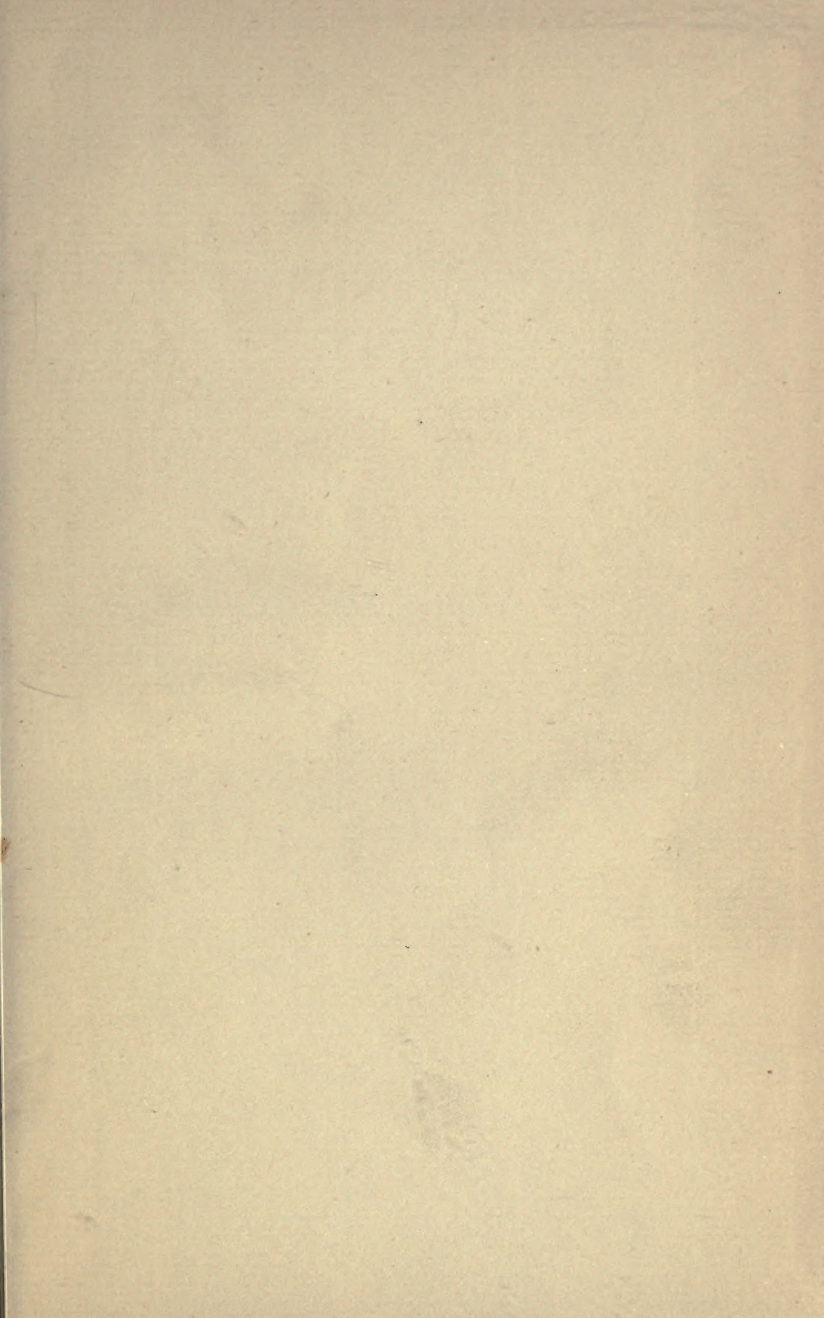


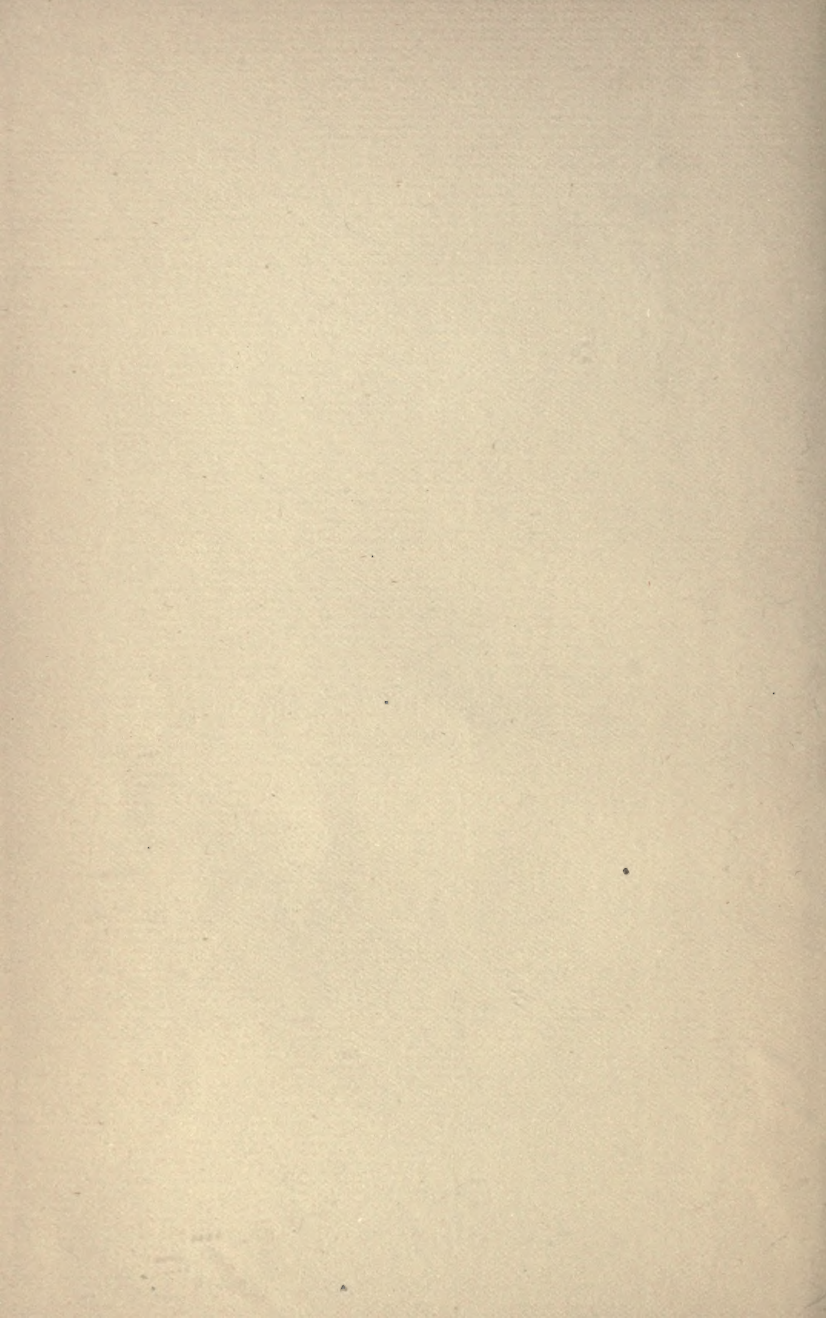




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*AMONG MY BOOKS*





~~L.E.H.~~  
~~1767 am~~

# Among My Books

Papers on Literary Subjects by  
the following Writers

*Augustine Birrell*  
*Andrew Lang*  
*'Ian MacLaren'*  
*J. P. Mahaffy*  
*Austin Dobson*  
*Leslie Stephen*  
*'A'*  
*Edmund Gosse*  
*Goldwin Smith*

*Herbert Paul*  
*Earl of Crewe*  
*'John Oliver Hobbes'*  
*'Vernon Lee'*  
*Stanley Lane-Poole*  
*Arthur Machen*  
*Hon. Lionel A. Tollemache*  
*George W. Smalley*  
*D. H. Madden*

*Percy Fitzgerald*

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With a Preface by  
H. D. Traill, D.C.L. (ed.)



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## P R E F A C E

THE literary *causeries* which form the contents of this volume made their first appearance in the pages of *Literature*; and, as Editor of that Journal, I have been honoured with an invitation to introduce this collection of them with a few words of my own. It gives pain to my patriotism to find that before three of these words have been set down, I am forced to become a borrower from the French language, but in truth there is no escape from the necessity of raising this forced loan. The word *causerie*, as it is known and understood in the literary and artistic world of France, describes the scope and spirit of these papers with substantial accuracy; and no English word does. They are too short to be called essays in the modern sense, though, to be sure, they are nearly all of them longer than most of Bacon's, with whom their authors will not object to be compared; and only in one or two cases do they at all approach to the character of a specific and detailed review of any particular work. They are, in short, what it was our desire that they should be when we sought the aid of the distinguished men and women of letters who have contributed them—that is to say, con-

versational discourses on every and any variety of literary topic that might suggest itself to the student and book-lover sitting down to write under the conditions and in the surroundings indicated by the title of the series.

This title has of course been criticised, principally, no doubt, by those who have never themselves undertaken the perplexing duties of sponsor at one of these arduous christenings; and it has been said that some of the writers show no signs of having derived even so much as an accidental and momentary inspiration from the contents of their libraries. *Among My Books*, contend these captious critics, is no very appropriate title for a paper which might have been inspired (say they) 'by a review read in a railway train, or a novel lying on a club table.' I confess I am not much moved by this objection. To me it seems that the reflections of a scholarly and thoughtful mind need not, and do not, savour less of the library, because their theme may have offered itself from the world without. On the contrary, there is no keener whet to the studious appetite than the student derives from his 'walks abroad,' nor anything more likely to move him to utterance, on his return to the library, than his sharp sense of the contrast between the sobriety of temper, the maturity of judgment, the perfection of form—in a word, the genuine, time-tried merits of the dead and gone writers on the shelves around him, and the hasty verdicts, the crude deliverances, the sham attractions, the noisy

*réclame*, with which current literature too much abounds.

This observation, however, applies but to a few of the *causeries* included in the volume. In the large majority of the contributions to the *Among My Books* series, the association with the library is not, I think, difficult to trace. A book-lover among his books has many moods, and the spirits of their departed authors speak to him with many voices. Now he seems to hear the plaintive whisper of some 'inheritor of unfulfilled renown' who was promised immortality, and for all that one can see now, has as good a right to it as many who have won it; and then the student feels moved to remind the world once more of this forgotten one, and to protest against his doom of unmerited neglect. Now it is he himself who is the accused, and as he listens to the reproachful sigh of some teacher of his youth who has long since ceased to offer him a 'key of the universe,' his conscience urges him to acknowledge his debt and to explain his defection. Or again, 'the book' may suggest 'the critic,' as it did to the admired essayist who played coryphæus to the series, and diverted his readers with one of those agreeable exercises in raillery which are a stumbling-block to the humourless and a delight to everyone else. Or perhaps it is not a single voice that we hear from our laden book-shelves, but a chorus of voices, a moan, a murmur as from an overcrowded population, asking when this perpetual and suffocating



addition to their numbers is to cease. When that happens, a terror seizes upon the bookman, and, despairing of any effective results from the efforts of the reviewers, who, to do them justice, try their hardest to 'expose' the weakly infant at birth, an eminent critic propounds an ingenious plan providing for the automatic extinction of all neglected books at the age of one hundred years. Few of us, I suppose, are strangers to the emotions which found expression in this proposal, but it is not well to encourage them. 'That way madness lies.' If for a moment I revive them, it is only for the purpose of illustrating the variety of the ways in which their libraries have appealed to the various contributors to this volume, and of the responses which the appeal has called forth. A glance at the table of contents, with its titles ranging from an essay on style to a chapter of biography, and from a colloquy on ethics to a Shakspearian 'squib,' should suffice to satisfy the reader that the volume contains food for the most diverse literary tastes. That they will find it both palatable and nutritious, the reputation of its purveyors should prove a sufficient guarantee.

H. D. T.

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# AMONG MY BOOKS

## I

### A COLLOQUY ON CRITICISM

BY AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

THERE is (about this we are pretty well certain) nothing more uncomfortable and disquieting to the ordinary good fellow—and unless you adopt a standard of excellence so high as must damn the whole British Empire, most of the sons of Adam are good fellows—than to find himself at logger-heads with his neighbour about anything.

The people who love to differ are the minority—they may be found, no doubt, if not in every hamlet, certainly in every township, but for all that they are the minority, and only distantly resemble the kindly hosts who love best those songs which have a chorus in which all can join.

As a proof of this I would instance the unhappiness of finding yourself positively disliking and despising some book written, it may be, by an acquaintance, which is enjoying great popularity. To take it up only to find its 'pathos' repulsive, its 'humour' disheartening, its 'merriment' offen-

sive, and then laying it down with a groan, to read, or, worse still, to be told by some honest fellow, of its strange power, its dramatic grip, its enormous sale. All this is sheer agony. The ordinary sorrows of life, however crushing, are shared with humanity. Tombs and monuments remind you of other men's bereavements;—the list of bankrupts gives you a feeling of kinship with half the town; but this inability to enjoy what apparently all the world is enjoying is intolerable.

It is no use saying *de gustibus*, etc. In the first place it is not true. Burke long ago pointed out, in his Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, that mankind are more generally agreed about Virgil than they are about Aristotle. These things cut very deep into life. Were you to be condemned to spend three months at sea in a small cabin with a stranger, with what easy composure would you hear him, the first night, declare himself a Hobbist, but how would your heart sink within you were he to aver that he never could see anything funny in 'Pickwick!' It is a very serious thing to differ radically on a question of taste.

And so it comes about that the life of a Critic in these times is well-nigh intolerable, and, indeed, it is not without emotion—genuine emotion—that to-day I see launched a new critical adventure. It makes a brave appearance as it pushes off, friends wave their handkerchiefs, the captain is on the upper deck, the crew (well-tanned veterans some of them) wave their new quills—it is indeed a gallant

sight! Yes—but look ahead to the sea where the ship must go, to the far-off ocean, whose vast tides pant dumbly passionate with dreams of all the books, as yet unwritten, which *Literature* must review, and of the authors, passionate but not dumb, whom we shall, if we do our duty, most grievously offend. *Duty!* the word instantly arrests one, just as did the word ‘delicacy’ the great Journalist in *Friendship’s Garland*. ‘Delicacy,’ he murmured, ‘surely I have heard the word, in the old days before I learnt to call Hepworth Dixon’s style lithe and sinewy, and before ever I wrote for this cursed paper.’ So at the word ‘Duty’ I stand at attention. What are the duties of a Critic?

No sooner is the question asked than temperament steps in and makes everything difficult. One man’s temperament leads him to magnify his office, another’s to minimise it. Pomposity is the besetting sin of the one, cynicism of the other. Of the two Mr Cynic is the more agreeable, while Mr Pomposity does the least harm. It is desirable to avoid ‘glasses’ and to see things with the naked eye.

Can it be said that to review new books as they appear is a public duty? The fact that it is discharged privately proves nothing. Until 1870, in England the duty of educating the young was discharged by the British and Foreign School Society and the National Society, whilst for many a long day the duties of nursing the poor and visiting

prisons were left to individual charity. The maintenance of the Fine Arts is, after a beggarly fashion, recognised by the State, and there are those who seriously advocate a National Theatre. Ought Criticism to be established and endowed? Should the *Gazette* appear with a Literary supplement? On the whole, we think not.

But if Criticism is a matter of private enterprise it should be undertaken in a suitable spirit. The famous motto of the *Edinburgh Review* assumes too much. A Judge is not self-elected, neither does he choose his calendar and condemn whom he wills. The country prosecutes, the jury convicts, the Judge sentences. Professor Wilson, the noisiest of all professors, owed no duty to the public to ridicule John Keats in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Lady Eastlake had no better right to slander Charlotte Brontë in the *Quarterly Review* than has any evil-tongued woman to revile her neighbour in the market-place.

The duties of a Critic are those of a handicraftsman who takes money in exchange for an article of his manufacture. He must do his best to learn his business, and, having learnt it, to go about it diligently and honourably, and in a spirit of humanity. He must avoid the error of imagining his opinion to be a great matter, but he is not entitled, if his criticism be printed and circulated, to treat it as if it were of no moment whatever.

Critics are sometimes accused of forgetting the publicity, the almost awful publicity, of the Print-



ing Press, and of scattering abroad in the lightness of their hearts all kinds of winged words and poisoned arrows. But do they? You have only to compare the trenchant and often most valuable criticism you hear at a dinner table with the tame, emasculated utterances of the Press to realise how paralysing is publicity and how impossible it is to say in print what you may utter with perfect propriety in private. Nobody can truthfully assert that harshness or brutality is a characteristic of present-day criticism. Whether it be wise or foolish, important or insignificant, it is at least good-natured. Books are liberally besmattered with praise, and the rarest gifts of the gods are affected to be bestowed upon writers of the most humble endowments. Enthusiasm seems easily kindled. Nobody, as I have already said, wishes to differ with his neighbour, least of all to make his differences public. 'Whistle and let the world go by' is a maxim of prudence, and one very generally observed by wise men. But how is the poor Critic to observe it? A popular novel, a popular volume of theology, and a popular poet are sent him for review. He reads, and as he reads his gorge rises. They are—so, at least, the unhappy writer conceives—everything fiction, religion, poetry ought not to be; what should be natural is forced, what should be devout is vulgar, what should be felicitous is ill-expressed; grace, dignity, delicacy, charm—of no one of these qualities is there so much as a trace. Of course, the reviewer

may be mistaken. But if he is, his whole outlook upon this world is mistaken ; all that is about him is mistaken ; his library is all wrong ; every estimate he has formed, every lesson he has learnt is all wrong—everything is upside down, if these books be anything but the poor trash his judgment tells him they are. But is he to say so? The novelist is a great friend of his wife's sister, the divine and the poet are club acquaintances of his own. He cannot say what he really thinks of their productions—their 'work,' as they love to call their lucubrations. Unable to say what he thinks, he proceeds to say as little as he can about the books before him, and to fill up his space with general reflections, which are deprived of all value because the writer does not apply them fearlessly to the matter in hand. The result is deplorable.

## II

### HISTORY AS IT IS WRITTEN

BY ANDREW LANG

**I**S it cynical to be diverted by the innocent absurdities of historians? Nothing, to my mind, can be more amusing, in the way of literature, than to read, side by side, the works of two historical writers who deal with the same period, and, to a great extent, with the same authorities, but who differ in sentiment. I have lately read, in pure indolence, the chapters on Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor, by Mr Froude and Mr Patrick Fraser Tytler. Mr Tytler was no Mariolater. He thought that Mary had a guilty knowledge of her husband's murder, but as to how much Mary knew he was uncertain. The Regent Murray he regarded as a great, and, on the whole, as a good man, with a dash of the Pecksniff. Mr Froude had no doubt that Mary was deep in her lord's murder; Murray he admired as the Bayard of early Protestantism. As to Elizabeth, Mr Froude had few illusions. His opinion about her guilty knowledge

of Amy Robsart's murder is rather like Mr Tytler's opinion about Mary's guilty knowledge of Darnley's murder, though not so frankly expressed.

There does not seem to be a very wide difference between the ideas of these two historians, but, when we compare their works, we are entertained and edified by what they each leave out in their unconscious *suppressiones veri*. I would not accuse either gentleman of being consciously unsportsmanlike ; nevertheless each omits exactly the points on which the other lays stress. This, of course, is futile. The facts are accessible, many of them are already printed ; moreover one author is sure to tell what the other may be trusted to leave untold. Yet they cannot be trusted to be quite candid. Thus to give a few examples, there was the return of the forfeited Earl of Lennox to Scotland in 1564. Mr Froude admits that Elizabeth had 'supported his petitions' for restoration to his lands. In fact Elizabeth had warmly urged it. But, as soon as Mary had granted Elizabeth's desire, that lady changed her mind. Mr Tytler has several pages on this subject ; he quotes the replies of Mary's ministers as to Elizabeth's insistence on Lennox's pardon, as to Elizabeth's care to have evidence of her fickle behaviour destroyed. Mr Froude omits all that ; he merely says that a variety of pretexts were invented for delay or refusal.

Melville was now sent by Mary to England, and both our authors cite a Latin letter, from Elizabeth to Cecil, in which the English Queen admits that



she is entirely unable to find a reply to her Scottish sister. 'Invenias igitur aliquid boni quod in mandatis scriptis Randall dare possim.' This seems a simple affair, each historian has to translate an easy piece of Latin. Let us see how they do it. Here is Elizabeth's note to Cecil; both historians give, practically, the same Latin, except that, if Mr Tytler quotes correctly, then Mr Froude loyally amends her Majesty's spelling and grammar. So I offer Mr Froude's text.

'In ejusmodi labyrintho posita sum de responso meo reddendo ad Reginam Scotiæ' [Tytler, for 'labyrintho,' 'laberintho,' for 'ad Reginam,' 'R. (Reginæ) Scotiæ'], 'at nescio quomodo illi satisfaciam, quum neque toto isto tempore illi ullum responsum dederim, nec quid mihi dicendum nunc sciam. Invenias igitur aliquid boni quod in mandatis scriptis Randall dare possim [possem, in Tytler], et in hac causa tuam opinionem mihi indica.'

Even as to Cecil's endorsement of this scrap our authors differ. Mr Froude has 'endorsed in Cecil's hand "The Queen's Majesty's writing, being sick, September 23."'

Mr Tytler has, 'Thus backed by Cecil, 23rd September, 1564. At St James's The Queen writing to me being sick.' Who was sick? The Queen, in Mr Froude's opinion; Cecil, in Mr Tytler's view. 'Elizabeth was harassed into illness' (Froude); 'Cecil was then confined to his chamber by sickness' (Tytler). Which author

could not copy an endorsement without omissions, or additions, and blunders?

Now let us compare the translations of this short and simple epistle :—

TYTLER'S TRANSLATION.

'I am involved in such a labyrinth, regarding the reply to the letter of the Queen of Scots, that I know not how I can satisfy her, having delayed all this time sending her an answer, and now really being at a loss what I must say. *Find me out some good excuse*, which I may plead in the despatches, to be given to Randolph, and let me know your opinion in this matter.'

FROUDE'S TRANSLATION.

'I am in such a labyrinth about the Queen of Scots (no reference to her letter), that what to say to her or how to satisfy her I know not. I have left her letter to me all this time unanswered, nor can I tell what to answer now. *Invent something kind for me*, which I can enter in Randolph's commission, and give me your opinion about the matter itself.'

Now, does *invenias aliquid boni* mean 'Invent something kind,' or 'Find out some good excuse?' It cannot well mean both, and the difference is important.

A little later both historians describe the situation when Elizabeth made Lord Robert Dudley an Earl. Mr Froude (whose ignorance of human nature one admiringly envies) holds that Elizabeth was honest in wishing to give Leicester up to Mary. Mr Tytler is strongly of the opposite opinion. Well, the authority of both historians here is Sir James Melville, Mary's envoy. Mr Tytler, naturally, one may say inevitably, cites the famous passage, 'The Queen could not refrain from putting her hand in his' (Leicester's) 'neck to kittle him,

smilingly, the French Ambassador and I standing by.' Mr Froude does not cite this passage. Yet one woman does not usually cede to another an admirer whom she cannot refrain from tickling in public. Mr Froude doubts Melville's general veracity, but quotes him just where he is *not* quoted by Mr Tytler.

One might go on quoting these parallels, but I confine myself to one case, which seems very egregious. After the Rebellion in the North (1569), when Mass was celebrated once more in the desecrated Cathedral of Durham, Northumberland fled across the Border, and was sold to Murray by Hector Armstrong, of Harlaw. This was the one crime which Borderers could not pardon. Murray then, according to Mr Tytler, proposed to exchange the betrayed Northumberland for Mary, his sister, a captive in England. What he meant to do with Mary, 'Tis better only guessing.' At all events, he promised that she 'should live her natural life.' This proposal to sell Northumberland to his death, in exchange for Mary, Mr Tytler cites from 'Copy of the Instrument,' endorsed with names of certain Scotch nobles, allies of Murray's, in Cecil's hand. Knox, at the same date, sent a letter bidding Cecil '*strike at the root*'—Mary. Mr Tytler also cites Murray's instructions to his envoy, and his demand for Mary's person, from a note 'wholly in Cecil's hand,' and adds that Lesley, Bishop of Ross, detected a proposition 'equivalent to signing Mary's death warrant.' Then Murray was shot

by Bothwellhaugh, and the arrangement fell through.

Well, Mr Froude quotes much from Murray's instructions, as Mr Tytler does, but about the proposed surrender of Northumberland in exchange for Mary Mr Froude does not say one single word (chapter 53, 1570), nor a word about the Bishop of Ross's remonstrance, any more than Mr Tytler dwells on the said Bishop's alleged confessions that Mary poisoned her first husband, and so forth. When we come to these episcopal revelations, it is Mr Tytler's turn to leave things out. To be sure, the learned Bishop confessed rather too much, like Topsy. Why should Mary, when Queen of France, make herself a premature Dowager by poisoning her husband, the King?

It would be worth while to make a tabular statement of all Mary's iniquities, from the days when she was her uncle's mistress till she poisoned her first husband, blew up her second, and tried to poison her little boy with an apple. A greyhound shared the apple with her pups, and they all expired incontinently. Greyhounds are notoriously fond of apples, and apt to share an apple with their whelps, while apples are easy things to poison. On the other hand, a mere glance through Mr Tytler's pages supplies a long list of Murray's treacheries: 'He betrays Mary's intentions,' 'Treachery of the Lord James,' 'Conspiracy of Murray and Argyll,' 'Art and part in Riccio's murder,' and so forth, till he plunders his sister's diamonds, and tries



to get hold of her by betraying Northumberland.

Thus is history written, till one despairs, if not of history, at least of historians. There is a pleasing edition of Burnet, with the notes of Swift and other contemporaries. An edition of Mr Froude, *cum notis variorum*, with the errors corrected and the omissions supplied, would also be a valuable work, and much more humorous than *The Comic History of England*.



### III

## UGLINESS IN FICTION

BY 'IAN MACLAREN'

NOVEL readers escaped from the sex novel with a sense of relief, and were beginning to hope that fiction was returning to the decencies of life, when the slum novel appears and fills us with despair. For the majority of us hard-working men (and women), toiling considerably more than eight hours a day in various professions and businesses, fiction is an appreciable relief and reinforcement. An hour with a well-written novel when the work of the day is done—say at 10 P.M., if we be fortunate—consoles one for a long spell of care and drudgery. As a class, we are not unreasonable nor exacting; we do not complain that no 'Henry Esmond' nor 'Heart of Midlothian' is to be heard of anywhere, but are unaffectedly grateful for a tale which is interesting and well written. If the author be able to move us to tears or laughter after an honest, manly fashion, or to set us a-thinking on the problems of society, or to brace us to do our

duty better, or to waken us up by a good adventure story, then our hearts grow warm to the man, and we rouse ourselves from arm-chairs to acknowledge our debt, and afterwards burn the letter as becomes self-respecting Englishmen who are more ashamed of emotion than of anything else under the sun. Nor are we really squeamish and prudish, some of us having had occasion to know almost as much of life as a woman novelist, but let us confess that we would prefer to keep (fairly) good company in our hours of rest. We are perfectly aware that people swear and do other things which are worse, but without being Pharisees we distinctly object to books which swear on every page and do other things on the page between, being our companions for the hour when the lamp is lit and the streets are quiet. It may be our narrowness, and we are prepared to hear that we are Philistines and destitute of the very beginnings of culture if we are rather sick of a certain monotonous adjective and the other things. We condoned oaths in Thackeray because it was the custom of very agreeable people to swear then, but it is only the custom of very disagreeable people now, and while some of us in various walks of life have to endure such people, at times we do not hanker after their unnecessary and voluntary company.

This deplorable disability to appreciate a highly-flavoured book does not blind one to its frequent force and partial veracity. It deals, let it be granted, with elemental facts of savage life at



home and at first hand. The author has heard with his own ears and not another's, and has seen with his own eyes, and whatsoever he has heard and seen he has written ; or if there be some things kept back they are only such as could not be legally put into print. One must also, as a rule, acknowledge with admiration the dramatic sense of the author who recognises a situation at a glance, and his artistic skill who presents it with a firm touch. It is the substance, not the workmanship, which offends and repels. Very likely the subject is a chapter in the life either of a coster girl or a street arab, which is sometimes disgusting, sometimes immoral, and always unpleasant. Perhaps there is a minute description of a bank holiday excursion, where lovers drink incredible quantities of beer, and eat like ravenous beasts. There will almost certainly be a fight between two women, with full details, and if there be a death-scene, the mother will discuss with a neighbour whether the coffin should be 'helm' or 'hoak' while her daughter lies a-dying, and relate with gusto how the coffin lid was at last fastened down on her husband's body, whose dropsy had made him an inconvenient size, by the simple expedient of the widow's weight being added to that of two undertakers. One breathes throughout an atmosphere of filth, squalor, profanity, and indecency, and is seized with moral nausea. There are such things as drains, and sometimes they may have to be opened, but one would not for choice have one opened in his library.

When one asks why this kind of book should be written, and, let us suppose, by an author of power—did not Rudyard Kipling turn aside to write ‘Badalia Herodsfoot’ and thereby incur a considerable paternal responsibility?—it will doubtless be replied, because it is true and it is desirable that people should know the truth. If costers or other people are living after a bestial fashion, then this ought to be known to all whom it may concern. Which means that such books are really semi-philanthropic and are novels with a purpose, falling into the class of ‘Nicholas Nickleby’ and ‘Never too Late to Mend.’ This leaves the question of their art untouched, but it vindicates their intention, and so at the worst the slum novel is only a mistake. It is, however, a very distinct mistake. For one thing the people who are addressed would be far more likely to be impressed were the life of this under-world stated in terms of fact and not tricked out as fiction. Besides, it is impossible that this can be the whole life of the East-end—this inferno of vice and violence. Is there no purity, no loyalty, no kindliness, no self-respect among these people? It is incredible that they should all be ruffians and loose women; and, therefore, it is certain that one side of life is ignored; and, if this be so, the description is disproportionate and unreliable. The writer has seen only such things as he proposed to see; they could not, of course, be the things he wished to see; and, instead of being realistic, his book is an inverted idealism in which—

manipulating facts according to his mind—the author presents what is morally ugly as another idealist would present what is morally beautiful. Possibly the author may repudiate any purpose and may content himself with pleading the compulsion of his art. This life exists as a matter of fact, and it has appealed to his literary sense ; it is a subject, and he has represented what he has seen. As a painter takes a black sullen pool, so a novelist has chosen this sink of human life—this is his *métier*, and nothing remains to be said. It is his form of art, and has to be judged by the rules of art. If so, a question at once occurs to the simple reader, and he would be greatly obliged by an answer. Is the representation of moral ugliness really artistic? As one understands it, the chief end of, say, sculpture is to create in marble that idea of physical beauty which lies in the background of the mind ; and while suffering may be included in the beautiful, as for instance in the Dying Gladiator, or much of Michelangelo's work, no sculptor of the first order has set himself to embody in marble hideous deformity. Painters have not shrunk from crucifixions, but they have not chosen leprosy, although the silver sheen had lent itself well to treatment ; nor a surgical operation, although the blood—well one need not press that point. Why is a humpback or a leper inadmissible? Because they are the violation of the law of things ; they are imperfection and disease. Why should the artist in life forsake the quest of the perfect and

the beautiful, wrought out often through poverty and agony, and spend his skill on what is loathsome and disgusting? Is he not also bound to the service of the ideal, and is it not his function to fling out before us that model of high character and living which we all have imagined, after which we all strive, but which we cannot express; or is it that the canon of beauty which guides the sculptor and the painter has no authority over the novelist, and he alone of artists has the liberty of deformity?

#### IV

### THOUGHTS ON STYLE

BY J. P. MAHAFFY

LITERARY men of old were supposed, I believe, to wander at will among their books and cull from their shelves what took their fancy. If such was indeed the case, they enjoyed a leisure very different from that of our generation. The man of books no longer brings out of his treasure-house things new and old, like the householder in the Gospel, but these things are borne in upon him by circumstances, and his mind is determined by what he has to read. Who can avoid, at this moment, reading critic after critic upon the 'Life of Tennyson,' a book which has hit the fortunate moment, 'when nothing else was going on,' and so has got an ample hearing. A college Don in Dublin is led by his examinations at this same moment to re-read the great classics which have long been part of his mental furniture, and so I chance to have before me again Virgil, the literary



artist whom common consent has declared to be the most Tennysonian of the ancients. Not that our poet's direct obligations to Virgil are so marked as those to Theocritus, with whom he seems to have been saturated, but the general resemblance is surely most remarkable. Virgil is far the greatest of the Roman poets, not by reason of his great ideas—in that Lucretius is his rival—but by reason of the combined purity and dignity of his style, which bears the evidence of being deliberately and consciously polished to the utmost degree of propriety and refinement. Illustrations abound on every page of his work. Take but one, not above the average, in his brief lines on the palace of Circe, which Æneas passes at the opening of the seventh book of the epic, from which I select but two :

Hinc exaudiri gemitus, iræque leonum  
Vincla recusantum et serâ sub nocte rudentum.

You feel that Virgil must have heard the strange grating and metallic sound of a lion's roar at some Roman amphitheatre. And so he uses the word *rudentum*. Such is the kind of perfection to be found all through Tennyson, and when one of our weekly oracles of wisdom, in its recent comparison of Shakespeare with him, said many true things, it seems to me to have missed an important contrast in this respect. To talk of the style of Shakespeare seems to me odd and irrelevant. The style of Tennyson is of the essence of his greatness.

This reminds me of an interesting remark in Gustave Flaubert's correspondence. 'What distinguishes great genius is generalisation and creation ; it resumes scattered personalities in a type, and brings new characters to the consciousness of humanity. Shakespeare is something tremendous in this respect ; he was not a man, but a continent : there are crowds and countries in him. Such men have no need of attending to style. They are strong in spite of all their faults, and even because of them ; but we, the little ones, are worth nothing except by finish of execution. V. Hugo, in this century, will eat up everybody, although he is full of faults. I venture on this proposition—that great men often write very badly, and so much the better for them. It is not to them that we must go for the art of form, but to men like Horace and La Bruyère.' I should leave out V. Hugo, who certainly aimed at a splendid style, and should put in Walter Scott, who now offends the young Scotland of Stevensonians by the negligences of his diction. But he, too, was far too great for style ; he was unfolding such a wealth of human nature, galleries of great portraits, of nationalities, volumes of history and of legend, that he had neither time nor care for the graces of a polished style. Look how his people live, just like the people of Shakespeare, in the hearts of all English-speaking people, nay, even in the hearts of foreigners, for Scott, owing to his want of style, is capable of translation ! On the other hand, there

is something so personal in an elaborated style that the characters are thrown into the shade by the personality of the poet, and so Tennyson has not left us a single character whose name is a household word, such as Scott and even far lesser men have created. His imagination has not furnished us with a great hero. The portrait of Arthur Hallam is drawn from real life with loving care, but fades out in the great 'In Memoriam' before the deep world-problems which fill the poet's mind, and so that exquisite monument of personal grief is like the Attic tomb reliefs, in which we wonder at the poetical pictures of human sorrow, without knowing or caring what individual bereavement they were designed to commemorate.

But here I am, discoursing of style, concerning which my fastidious academic friends tell me I know nothing. Nevertheless, every man who writes must have some notions about good and bad writing, though they may be faulty. In a paper just published I had reason to compare two authors whom I called Miss Austen and Marie Corelli. An excellent academic Mentor said that was wrong; I should have said for conformity's sake, 'Jane Austen.' But, if I could only clear myself of the grave charge of having courted alliteration, I should defend my phrase by the fact that when we were young we always heard from our prim and staid relations of *Miss* Austen, a lady of whom they spoke with respectful but distant admiration. They would have thought

*Jane* rather forward. And this marks the contrast to which I was pointing between certain older and newer novelists.

I have just said that thoughts on style may be expected from any literary source, and, by way of curious confirmation, where do I find the latest essay on this subject? Actually in the *Hellenic Journal*, where there is a paper not only very instructive but very interesting on the well-known tract 'On the Sublime,' which dates from the purist Renaissance in the days of Augustus. The author, who is apparently a literary amateur, tells us his ideas concerning fine style, as opposed to poverty and vulgarity on the one side, artificiality and bombast on the other. Mr Rhys Roberts has given an excellent analysis of this very sensible and 'modern' piece of criticism, and only shows in one spot that he has not taken the lessons of Longinus adequately to heart. I do not think the off-hand judgment disparaging Bacchylides in comparison with Pindar is wholly justified by what we read in the new papyrus. There seems to be, with great simplicity of structure and of metre, a rich vocabulary, and a great deal of fine and moving pathos in these odes. But it is hard to judge æsthetically, when impeded by the trouble of deciphering even an easy hand. There is no need, however, to anticipate the verdict of scholars which will be let loose upon the world almost immediately. But I return to the interesting passage thus translated in the *Hellenic Journal*:—

‘The legislator of the Jews, no ordinary man, having formed and expressed a worthy conception of the might of the Godhead, writes at the very beginning of his Book of Laws:—“And God said”—what? Let light be, and it was; let earth be, and it was.’ What a strange bathos in expression! And has Mr Roberts never appreciated our Authorised Version? Longinus is quoting loosely from some version (not the LXX) read out to him by some Jewish friend. But surely the A. V. is just as accurate—‘Let there be light, and there was light. Let the dry land appear, and it was so.’ At all events, this was English.

I suppose it is only in so very simple an instance that we can reproduce sublimity in a translation. And how many of us can really understand the beauties of any language but our own? When I see criticisms on French and German masterpieces written by men who are unable either to speak or write these languages, it reminds me of the foreign criticisms on Burns by people who can read English, but who only know the dialect of Burns, as I do, through a glossary. And what knowledge of a dialect can we gain through a glossary, or even through a dictionary? How can we learn the clusters of associations, the delicate shades of feeling which cling about words familiar to the poet from childhood, and which determine both the beauty and propriety of their use? So then, to the great body of English-speaking people, Burns as a great poet is inaccessible. How much more



to foreigners? And for the same reason Goethe's *Faust*, or the lyrics of V. Hugo, are by us only very imperfectly understood. Of course the same may be said of our appreciation of Sophocles and Virgil, who would laugh their sides sore at our Babu verses in their language. But then in dead languages no better knowledge is now to be had. In the living we should perhaps be content with native judgments. I have even heard it said by a great linguist that no man really knows more than one language—and most men not even that. But what a blow to all our critical literature and our fancied appreciation of the great masterpieces of many languages! These considerations are so humiliating that I feel disposed to apologise for bringing them forward.



# V

## 'THE ADVENTURES OF CHERUBINA'

BY AUSTIN DOBSON

WHEN the first editor of the *Quarterly* reported to John Murray, by request, upon Miss Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice,' he commended it chiefly for the absence of certain then-popular features. There were, he said, 'no dark passages, no secret chambers, no wind-howlings in long galleries, no drops of blood upon a rusty dagger'—things which, in Mr Gifford's opinion, 'should be left to ladies' maids and sentimental washerwomen.' That he failed to discover in Miss Austen the characteristics of Mrs Radcliffe is not extraordinary; nor to any fervent 'Janite' (to use Professor Saintsbury's word) will it seem strange that he should declare 'Pride and Prejudice' to be 'really a very pretty thing.' But it is assuredly worth noting that Miss Austen, so far from following the author of the 'Italian' and the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' had actually already composed a book to ridicule that

gifted writer—the MS. of which book, ‘Northanger Abbey,’ to wit, when Gifford wrote to Murray, was temporarily interred in a publisher’s drawer at Bath. It is, besides, curious that, notwithstanding the vexatious suppression of her own finely-touched little satire, Miss Austen should, in her correspondence, be generous enough to praise warmly another work which was also devoted to making fun of Mrs Radcliffe. ‘I finished the “Heroine” last night’—she writes to her sister Cassandra while on her way to London to publish ‘Mansfield Park’—‘and was very much amused by it. . . . It diverted me exceedingly.’ Later in the same letter she adds—‘I have torn through the third vol. of the “Heroine.” I do not think it falls off. It is a delightful burlesque, particularly on the Radcliffe style.’ This is ‘praise from Sir Hubert Stanley,’ and fully justifies us in taking down the volumes to be dusted.

Although occasionally to be discovered among those *bouquins de rebut achetés au rabais* of which De Musset writes, copies of the ‘Heroine’ are certainly not common, and may even be termed rare. The author’s name, which, it will be observed, Miss Austen does not mention, was Eaton Stannard Barrett, further described on his title-page as ‘Esquire.’ Born at Cork in 1786, Barrett was educated at Wandsworth, and afterwards entered the Middle Temple. But he seems never to have practised at the Bar, and he died prematurely of consumption in Wales. He made several incursions into literature. He wrote a comedy ; he

wrote political satires against the Whigs of his day, of which one, ‘All the Talents,’ obtained some contemporary reputation; and he wrote a Popesque eulogy on ‘Woman,’ four lines of which periodically, and not undeservedly, figure among the ‘Quotations Wanted’ of literary journals. ‘Not she,’ he says of his subject,

‘Not she with trait’rous kiss her Saviour stung,  
Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;  
She, while Apostles shrank, could dangers brave,  
Last at His cross and earliest at His grave.’

Finally, in addition to a novel called ‘Six Weeks at Long’s,’ he wrote the ‘mock Romance’ of which the full title is ‘The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina.’ It was published in 1813 by Henry Colburn, was dedicated to the Right Hon. George Canning, and bore for motto ‘L’Histoire d’une femme est toujours un Roman.’

The idea of burlesquing or satirising current forms of fiction was obviously not a new one. Without going back even as far as Mrs Lenox and the ‘Female Quixote,’ only a short time before the ‘Heroine’ appeared, Miss Charlton had essayed something of the kind in her ‘Rosella,’ and Mrs Green had put forth her ‘Romance Readers and Romance Writers.’ But Barrett, as fits a male, comes to closer quarters with his theme. Miss Cherry Wilkinson, whose adventures he relates, is the only daughter of a farmer who, by ‘honest and disgusting industry,’ has acquired—what he could



scarcely acquire now—a considerable fortune. Cherry's governess, who has been discharged for misconduct, and who has stuffed her pupil with romances, easily persuades her that she is a 'child of mystery.' Thereupon Miss Wilkinson discovers—with the aid of an old indenture—that her real name is, or should be, Cherubina De Willoughby, and that she is called to the career of a Heroine. For this she has already certain indispensable physical qualifications. Although but fifteen she is tall and 'aërial,' her hair is flaxen, her face Grecian, and her eyes blue and sleepy. She has also, according to one of her admirers, 'a voice soft as a Creolian lyre.' Further, she is an adept in most of the other requisites. She can 'blush to the tips of her fingers'; faint at pleasure; has tears, sighs, and half-sighs at command; is mistress of the entire gamut of smiles, from fragmentary to fatal, and is fully skilled in the arts of gliding, tripping, flitting, and tottering, which last, being the 'approach movement of heroic distress,' is the heroine's *ne plus ultra*. She is also fully posted in the obligations of a heroine to 'live a month on a mouthful,' to accomplish long journeys without fatigue, and to obtain the necessities of life without the tedious formalities of payment. Finding she is threatened with an old playfellow, one Stuart, as a suitor, she resolves to fly from her father's house. This she does, on a stormy night, taking with her, in 'a small band-box,' her jewels, her 'spangled muslin' (the regulation costume of heroines), her

satin petticoat, her silk stockings, and her satin shoes.

From this point to the end of Volume Three Cherubina ‘crowds and hurries and precipitates’ her remarkable adventures. At the outset she saves her would-be suitor Stuart from robbers, an act which constitutes him her convenient protector through the book whenever her vagaries make a *deus ex machinâ* imperative. Then she takes coach to London, meeting on the road one Betterton, whose intentions are not honourable. Escaping from him she falls in with a St Giles’ woollen-draper named Jerry Sullivan, whose womankind naturally distrust the spangled ‘child of mystery.’ So she takes refuge in a Baronial Castle, which turns out to be Covent Garden Theatre, where she meets an actor named Abraham Grundy, whose dramatic appellation of Lord Altamont Mortimer Montmorenci, and habit of acting (like John Kemble) both on and off the stage, exactly suit her *cadre*. He carries her to his lodgings, where also resides a half-crazy poet, whose poems are still unpublished, but who has written a biography of himself to precede them, which is a creditable parody on Johnson. Her father, following her, is promptly hustled by Montmorenci into a private madhouse; and Betterton (whose nefarious purposes are always foiled by her good angel Stuart) persuades her that she is entitled to the property of a certain Lady Gwyn. To Lady Gwyn’s, therefore, Cherubina repairs, by this time attired in a

Tuscan masquerade dress, modelled upon Mrs Radcliffe. Lady Gwyn, at first regarding her as mad, afterwards retains her to divert her friends. Failing to oust Lady Gwyn, she endeavours to establish herself on a feudal footing in a neighbouring ruin called Monkton Castle, with Sullivan as warden, Higginson (the crazy poet) as minstrel, and a body of haymakers, at so much *per diem*, as vassals. After doing a good deal of mischief, and going through a tangle of fantastic experiences, some of which, in a Gothic chamber, remind one of those of Catharine Morland, she comes to her senses. Her father is set free; and Stuart, indulgently admitting that 'her principles have been a little perverted by the influence of the native novel,' delivers himself of a discourse on fiction, which, although no burlesque, is not the less edifying. Upon romances he is extremely hard; they are dangerous stimulants to the imagination, which first elevate and then enervate. Sentimental novels are not much better, but he excepts among these latter, 'Rasselas' and 'The Misanthropist' (?). He advises Cherubina, as a remedial measure, 'to mix much in the world, and learn the customs of actual, not ideal society.' 'I now,' says that reformed young person, winding up her correspondence (the book, it should be stated, is in the 'epistolary style' which Fielding condemned), 'pass my time both usefully and agreeably. Morality, history, languages, and music occupy my mornings, and my evenings are enlivened by balls, operas, and

familiar parties.’ But, she adds, after referring to the good counsels of her companion Stuart, whom she of course eventually marries, ‘I still retain some taints of my former follies and affectations. My postures are sometimes too picturesque ; my phrases too flowery ; and my sentiments too exotic.’

The above is but a rapid and imperfect summary of an undoubtedly clever book, although the modern reader, especially if he be averse from burlesque, will probably conclude that Miss Austen was rather easily ‘diverted.’ He will, however, do well to bear in mind that, while its light-hearted parody of ‘Caroline de Lichtfield,’ the ‘Beggar Girl,’ the ‘Mysteries of Udolpho,’ the ‘Children of the Abbey,’ and the rest, is now hopelessly obscure to us, it was abundantly perceptible to that accomplished student of ‘follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies,’ the author of ‘Northanger Abbey.’





## VI

### PERISHABLE BOOKS

BY LESLIE STEPHEN

A SPEAKER at the recent conference of librarians complained that most modern books were doomed to speedy destruction, not in the spiritual but in the material sense. The paper on which they are printed will rapidly become mere pulp or impalpable powder. One might have supposed that such a result would be gratifying, especially to librarians. Considering what a vast proportion of printed matter not only is, but is intended to be, purely ephemeral, there could, at first sight, be no reason for desiring its preservation. The regret, perhaps, is an instance of a tendency noted by all psychologists. A pursuit becomes delightful for its own sake, even when its ostensible end ceases to be valuable. A zealous librarian takes such a pleasure in preserving literature that he forgets to consider whether the stores accumulated can be of any use, and then to enquire whether useless stores are not positively pernicious. Persons who are not subject to that illusion may take a different view.

Why should not all books be made of perishable materials? Hawthorne somewhere argues that when we have become civilised we shall again give up houses for tents. Why encumber ourselves with huge masses of bricks and mortar, which, if they suit the convenience of one generation, are all the more likely to be ill suited to its successors? Why, on the same principle, should we try to carry with us vast accumulations of printed matter which have served their only possible purpose? Would it not be a good thing if a law were made that no paper should be used which was not warranted to vanish (say) in a century? Domestic life now involves a continuous struggle against the masses of waste paper, circulars and advertisements, which pour in by every post; and but for a systematic destruction would cause a household to be snowed up as under a paper avalanche. The race at large is suffering in the same way; and some mode of self-defence is becoming absolutely necessary. The legislation we have suggested would provide an automatic machinery which would become operative at the end of the twentieth century. From that time forth no book would be in existence which would have been printed more than a hundred years, and room would be constantly made for a new influx by the spontaneous vanishing of rubbish.

It would not follow that all literature above a century old should perish. It would simply be that books not reprinted for a century would vanish.

All the great books, the models and masterpieces of literature, would be preserved ; and there would, we may suppose, be a constant watchfulness over books which were approaching the fatal term. The effect would be like that of cremation. We should destroy what is really dead instead of preserving mere mummies. The literature actually preserved would be mainly such as had some *primâ facie* claim to the title of classical. We are often exhorted to limit our reading to really good books. That is obviously impossible, if we are to know anything of our contemporaries ; but it seems to be a sound rule for the study of older literature. Shakespeare is worth reading ; but the only real use of plunging into the enormous rubbish heaps of the small Elizabethan literature is to glorify the Dry-as-dusts who won't recognise the inevitable law of death. The advantages are obvious in the case of history. A book which shall be a great work of art as well as an accurate record is now scarcely possible. The improvement of modern history is a familiar topic ; and in certain respects is undeniable. But it is permissible to doubt whether modern historians would not be better if great masses of records had been summarily destroyed. The examination of all manner of archives and State paper offices has, it is true, enabled recent inquirers to give elaborate accounts of the various purposes and impressions of Statesmen from day to day. If history is understood as implying an exact knowledge of Queen Elizabeth's

intentions as to Mary Queen of Scots at any given date the records have been invaluable. But even in the hands of a great literary artist like Froude, history written on this scheme often becomes wearisome, because we feel that the minute personal questions are both insoluble and irrelevant. The broad and really important facts are obscured by the supposed necessity of going into minute biography. Imagine a history of the present day written on the scale adopted for periods when documents were comparatively rare, and the unfortunate historian bound to be familiar with all the views of Mr Gladstone and Lord Salisbury and all their subordinates, to read all the private letters, and all the despatches, and all the Blue-books, and all the statistical tables, to make up his mind about all the ins and outs of the labour question, and the education question, and the rights of our policy in Egypt and India—any one of which is enough to occupy the whole time of a contemporary. If it takes Mr Gardiner a year to write the history of a year at Cromwell's time, it will hereafter take a lifetime to write of a year under Queen Victoria. History on such a scale is plainly impossible; and it is every day becoming more essential to tabulate, classify, prepare indexes, and in one way or other to organise the vast masses of information which are accumulating more and more rapidly. The unhappy historian in the future will be physically unable to go into a hundredth part of the available sources of informa-

tion. He must constantly be content with summaries without trying to go behind them ; and it is desirable that the burthen should be lightened by destroying what is plainly useless. We seem to be making such a mistake as a collector of a museum of natural history, who should not be content with getting examples of every species, but should try to keep every example he could of each species. The historian is constantly tempted to waste time by ascertaining facts, not because everybody supposes that they can throw any more light upon any serious question, but simply because they are ascertainable. He can only refuse on peril of being denounced as superficial by somebody who spends his whole energy upon the minute details which are really without any significance. The historian will clearly have to abandon the pretence of omniscience ; but he should be freed from the temptation of pretending to it by destroying the worthless records, which, so long as they exist, make constant calls upon his attention. After all, a vast mass of knowledge is valueless ; it could be destroyed without really altering our judgment of any important point, and if we here and there destroyed something which might be of some use, we should get a greater advantage by making the waste of time upon such investigations once for all impossible.

The argument applies even more clearly to pure literature. How much of all the writing intended for ephemeral amusement is really worth the space



it occupies on the shelves of the British Museum? Look at any collection of British poets. Say honestly what proportion of it does any good to any human being. The old rule as to mediocrity in poetry gives the principle. A tenth-rate historian may add something to our knowledge of fact; but a tenth-rate poet does nothing whatever. He is simply an inferior echo of something better, and the original is enough for all our purposes. Would anybody suffer if Blackmore's 'Creation' or Boyse's 'Deity' had calmly and quietly vanished away? Will our grandchildren have any cause for sorrow if ninety-nine hundredths of all the publications of to-day should disappear like a bad dream? To keep such things, it may be said, is a harmless superstition. They may be stowed away in boxes and do no injury to anyone. There is, however, some harm to libraries, as every one knows who has anything to do with the accumulating matters which are always overpowering the energies of their guardians. But the bare existence of such repositories discourages and overwhelms conscientious readers. They are haunted by the vague impression that they ought to read everything, and forget that the more rubbish they study the less energy they have for what is good. And surely the honest writer of such stuff may feel the same. He writes an article to amuse his neighbours for a few minutes. He has nothing whatever to say to posterity. When he writes a letter to a friend he means it for the waste-paper basket. When he

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addresses the public, he means the public of his own period, and should feel it to be an impertinence if he is forced to present himself to the future race without any intention of his own. We are, as has sometimes been remarked, ephemeral beings, and ought to behave as such. Why should we be forced to be immortal? We should be content, and even eager, to pass into oblivion as soon as the temporary purpose of amusing an idle hour has been fulfilled. A writer who feels that strongly—of course we do not speak to the Heaven-born genius—should insist, if he could, upon having his work printed upon perishable materials. Immortality in print is not only a superfluity; the bare suggestion of its possibility is a positive injury to one's feelings.



## VII

### ON CERTAIN DEFECTS IN MODERN CRITICISM

BY 'A'

IT is as much in the interest of the readers of the present day as in that of the writers that I would plead with certain of our literary reviewers for some modification in the scale and language of criticism adopted by them in dealing with new publications. For I assume that the primary purpose of a review is to guide the reader as to the new publications which are likely to interest and attract him.

Speaking for myself, and, I should suppose, for most others, when I take up a periodical journal or review devoted to criticism, my first object is to see what books of value and merit have been lately given to the world. The review may not be able to afford space for long extracts from any such work dealt with, and we are therefore left entirely dependent on the taste and judgment of the critic. And in this matter it is evident that a great change has of late come over the disposition of the average

critic. Forty years ago, and longer, it was the common and just complaint that reviewers sacrificed too much to the pleasure (a very seductive one) of tossing and goring the author under review. The old *Quarterlies* and the *Saturday Review*, under its original management, for instance, had the reputation of being too severe. It was commonly supposed that political enmities, artistic differences of opinion, opposing historical schools, and the like, were allowed to enter into the region of literary criticism, and to deflect it sorely from the path of pure and impartial judgment. There may be something of this still left among us, but by far the most startling feature of modern reviewing is not its harshness, its scorn, its implacability, but rather its universal indulgence, and its indiscriminate and excessive language of eulogy.

It is only necessary to glance down the advertising columns of a literary journal, in which publishers attach 'Notices of the Press' to the books they announce, to be struck by this fact. Words and terms, once upon a time reserved only for the great masters of literature, for the great classics of the language, seem to be now sprinkled freely, with no sense of their incongruity, over any and every new work of fiction that may appear. The term 'genius,' for example, which was once held as it were a sacred appellation to be conferred on the *Dí Majores* of our literature, is now so common as to have lost any significance whatever. I noted it three times last week in the advertisements of a



single publisher, applied to some recent works of fiction. As for lesser terms of praise, 'unique,' 'unsurpassed,' 'first-rate,' 'intensely human,' 'quivering and palpitating with passion,'—these, I need not say, appear week after week as plentiful as blackberries.

It is therefore of a certain lack of moderation and discrimination that I complain as unfair to the reader who comes to the critic for guidance. He wants to know, in the first instance, which new books are of high excellence, which of a moderate merit, and which are to be avoided as worthless. Too often he reads reviews which seem to speak of all alike in language which used once, as I have said, to be restricted to the masterpieces of our literature. We all know the story of the little child, who, reading epitaph after epitaph in the churchyard, inquired with some surprise of its parent 'where all the wicked people were buried.' An unsophisticated stranger after reading review after review of modern works of fiction might well ask where all the worthless novels were interred. It is our sense of proportion that is offended when praise is universal. We long at last for some rough-and-ready measure of distinction. A graduated scale, numbered for reference, as thus :—(1) First-rate, (2) Good, (3) Good, but not good enough, (4) Very fair, (5) Fair, (6) Mediocre, (7) Poor stuff, (8) Pretentious trash, (9) Sensational rubbish, (10) Drivel—would at least indicate an attempt at classification, though it did not provide elaborate

reasons for the judgment given. But if the critic's judgment by classification were sound, it would be a great saving of trouble. The method might be crude and inartistic, and would not even make copy. But the reader, supposing the classification to be reasonably just, would at least be nearer than he is at present to knowing what to expect from the book noticed. The original prospectus of this present journal included the perfectly just remark, that indiscriminate praise encourages the production of much inferior literary work. There is nothing new, of course, in the observation, but it is not for that reason superfluous to repeat it. The old motto of the *Edinburgh Review*, taken from Publius Syrus—an author, said Sydney Smith, whom none of us had read—‘*Judex damnatur quum nocens absolvitur*,’ contains the whole moral in a nut-shell.

This is an age when the manufacture of books has reached a pitch unknown to any other period of our literature. The marked increase in the number of publishers in the last quarter of a century goes to show it. But it may well be doubted whether the multiplication of books accounts for the multiplication of publishers, or *vice versa*. The unprecedented range of topics chosen—as if the British Museum had been (to borrow the expressive simile of Lord Tennyson's Lincolnshire friend) ‘raked out with a small-tooth comb’ to find something new that will form an attractive title—forces one to suspect that

the genesis of many new works must be of this sort. And the strange thing, as it strikes the ignorant outsider, is this—that the vaster the annual crop of books, the more lenient, the less exacting, the critic appears to become. He seems to smile, with all-embracing benevolence, upon all! And this, I repeat, may be fun for the critic—and for the author—but how about the poor reader of the review, who is on the look out for suggestion and guidance?

And if there is this ground for the complaint that I am pouring forth, is there not another, of even more importance? Even the critics who have long erred on the side of excessive laudation are startled at last by the signs of a public standard of taste against which they are warring in vain. Certain novels of to-day, which need not be named, but which will occur to every one, selling by the hundred thousand—full of false humour, false philosophy, false pathos, and the most monstrous pictures of life, such books have at last awakened certain critics to the forgotten responsibilities of criticism. A few, no doubt, still take sides with the myriad purchasers—and boldly heap upon these works of fiction every epithet of praise that they can summon. But the majority, to do them justice, have, like the fabled worm, ‘turned at last.’ But it is too late. The admirers of these productions no longer care for the critic! The more their favourite romances are abused, the more fondly they cling to them. Yet I must

put in a word for such as these. Are they so much to be scorned, as we in our haste may think? Are they not showing, in part, simply the fruits of a defective education? Have they not been too often allowed, by their educators, to mistake the sham for the reality? The critic cannot, it is true, neutralise the natural bias of any reader towards what is fifth-rate. But I submit that he might have done more than he has in this direction.

## VIII

### ADDISON'S TRAVELS

BY EDMUND GOSSE

**I**N spite of the increase of intercommunication between England and the Continent, books of European travel of any practical merit were curiously rare at the close of the seventeenth century. It is difficult to see what guides there were for a smart young gentleman just setting out on the Grand Tour in 1699. If he had a turn for science, he might take with him the ponderous 'Observations' which John Ray, the naturalist, had published in 1673; a little more up to date were those disquisitions concerning political geography which Gilbert Burnet called his *Travels in Italy and Switzerland*. But this was practically all; and we must take this dearth into consideration when we judge a volume like Addison's 'Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, etc.,' which has unkindly, and, indeed, unfairly, been called a book of travels which might have been written at home. It is just because in 1699 there were no materials at home from which



it could be written that its interest, if not very exciting, is permanent.

The elegant and youthful traveller was far from being celebrated when this tour in Italy and Switzerland was taken. Joseph Addison had recently been confirmed in a Fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford; he had written somewhat unimportant copies of verses in Latin and English; he was projecting a translation of Herodotus, and nibbling here and there at Ovid. But Charles Montague had fixed his eye upon him, had extracted him from his shell in Oxford, and had persuaded Lord Somers to grant him a crown pension of £300 a year on which to prepare for politics by foreign travel. Accordingly, Addison loitered only long enough to get his Latin poems addressed to Montague printed in the '*Musæ Anglicanæ*,' as letters of introduction to Continental scholarship; and early in 1699 he started. Of his adventures in France the book before us says nothing; we know that a gift of the '*Musæ*' to Boileau gave that potentate of letters 'a very new idea of the English politeness.' But on the 12th of December, 1699, Addison started on board a 'tartane' from Marseilles bound for Genoa, and he did not return to England until 1703. Edward Wortley Montagu was with him, but Addison does not refer to him or to any companion.

It will be remembered that the elder Mr Shandy, long inconsolable for the loss of Bobby, was cheered by recollecting how many things referring to such

a bereavement could be collected from the Classics. Before starting for Italy, Addison filled a commonplace-book with passages from the Latin poets descriptive of scenes which he was likely to encounter, and he translated them as neatly as he could into English verse of the quality of Waller. These quotations, printed at the proper points in large type, occupy a great deal of room, and help to explain the fact that the book, although it has not very much substance in it, runs to the comparatively handsome figure of 534 pages. It was not published until 1705, that is to say, not until the sudden success of 'The Campaign' had made the author famous. The title-page was anonymous, but the interesting dedication to Lord Somers was signed, and no secret was made of the authorship.

The course the young traveller pursued ran from Genoa, through Pavia and Milan to Venice, then down to Ferrara and Rimini, and so, zigzagging across the Apennines, to Rome and Naples. He was perhaps the first Englishman to recognise the singular coziness of San Remo, and to smile at the pomposity of the principality of Monaco, where an officer remarked to him, 'with a great deal of Gravity, that his Master and the King of *France*, amidst all the Confusions of *Europe*, had ever been good Friends and Allies.' But the minute political sub-divisions of Italy itself were so far from scandalising Addison, that he notes an opinion that the geographical forms of that Peninsula predispose it to the formation of a large number of independent

States. Venice greatly entertained him, yet his descriptions of it are frigid ; the colourless purity of Addison's style at this period scarcely lends itself to the picturesque. He is much more his future self in little touches of ironical observation or humorous reflection which remind us of the *Spectator* of twelve years hence ; as, for instance, when, at a Venetian opera, Cato being discovered in his library, Addison is gratified to see that the author whom the Roman stoic studies is Tasso.

Addison was probably the earliest English traveller who visited San Marino, and, conscious of this fact, he gives a special chapter to an account of this sympathetic Republic. He tells us that the inhabitants are forbidden to wander about the slopes of their own mountain, lest unconsciously they should tread down a second path of entrance for a possible enemy. Later on, with much intrepidity, Addison ascends Vesuvius from Naples, and, on his way back to Rome by sea, stops his felucca at Capri and at Ischia. Forced to lie one night tossing under the promontory of Monte Circeo, the noise of the wind and sea on the rocks reminds him of 'the Howling of Wolves and the Roaring of Lions' ; here his classic reminiscences come upon him thick and fast, but he regrets, in more homely language, that the woods 'are most of 'em grubb'd up.' One of the most interesting passages in this neglected volume is that in which the fact of making the perilous and awkward entrance of the Tiber

suggests to Addison the benefits to our knowledge of ancient life which would accrue from judicious excavation.

From one end of Italy to the other, this ingenious young gentleman of Oxford, with difficulty snatched from Anglican orders, is sternly Protestant. The legends of Rome are all 'imposture' and 'bungling tricks'; at Siena the stories about St Catherine seem to him nothing but 'gross and absurd.' Nor is he more or less opposed to the Gothic forms of architecture than were his contemporaries. He is passionately in favour of the Palladian style, and all others seem to him savage. With Milan Cathedral he is extremely disappointed, and he dismisses Siena as a 'barbarous Building.' Palladio's church of Santa Justina in Padua, on the other hand, lifts him to an ecstasy; it is 'the most handsom, luminous, disencumber'd Building' Addison ever saw. In this the young traveller was of his time. His master Boileau, in crushing Ronsard, had found nothing more contemptuous than to rhyme 'Gothique' with 'rustique,' while Molière, in 'La Gloire du Val-de-Grâce,' had dismissed the exquisite cathedrals of his own country as 'ces monstres odieux des siècles ignorants.' But all this is no worse than what we have heard Mr Ruskin say of the architecture of the Renaissance, and every church, like every dog, may have its day.

Nor could Addison be expected to be more in sympathy with Alpine scenery than with Gothic architecture. Yet in Switzerland he has glimmer-

ings of appreciation. The panorama of the Oberland, taking him wholly by surprise from the Münster-Terrasse at Berne, faintly struck the chords of emotion ; and the drive from Yvoire to Thonon filled his spirit 'with an agreeable kind of Horror.' Soleure, now so dull a little town, appeared to Addison as having 'a greater Air of Politeness' than any other in Switzerland ; and he is strangely enthusiastic about St Gallen, which was, however, so completely rebuilt half a century later than Addison's time, that we can with difficulty place our eyes in the position of his. On the whole, Addison's lively description of Swiss places and conditions is better calculated than are his stiffer and more pedantic Italian chapters to make us realise what he visited, and the changes 'twixt now and then. For one thing, his inevitable Common-place-book from the Classics gave out as soon as he crossed the Alps, and he had no Lucan or Silius Italicus to tell him beforehand what his sensations ought to be by the Lake of Geneva or in the crocus meadows of the valley of the Aar.



## IX

### AMERICAN HISTORIES

BY GOLDWIN SMITH

SIR HENRY MAINE somewhere speaks of the nauseous grandiloquence of the American panegyrical historians. It was true, no doubt, when he wrote that in American histories rhetoric was apt to prevail over research, and that there was a lack of the judicial quality, especially in dealing with questions between the United States and Great Britain. But Sir Henry Maine wrote some time ago, and American historiography has since then greatly advanced alike in research, in impartiality, and in purity of style.

Nobody will complain of want of research in the works of Mr Henry Lea, Mr Justin Winsor, Mr John Fiske, Mr Henry Adam, Mr M'Master, Mr Schouler, or Professor Moses Coit Tylor, to mention only those whose works meet the writer's eye on his shelves. In truth there has now set in almost a mania for research, partly caught in Europe, which, one can hardly help thinking, leads

in some cases to a waste of labour; as, when an elaborate essay is written about municipal institutions now extinct, which were unimportant when they existed, and about the actual working of which we can know little, since they may after all have been mere constitutional masks for some one-man power. There is even a growing disposition, clearly imported from Europe, to make history what is called 'scientific'—that is to discard its moral and personal element and to reduce it to a dry statement of phenomena and their connection, analogous to the method of physical science, and in accordance with the hypothesis of evolution. It may be that if we could penetrate to the origin of all things, this treatment might turn out to be correct. We might find that the whole human drama, with all that appears to us to be personal, had been predetermined in the atoms of the nebula; for to that or to something still more remote the strictly evolutionary theory of history must go back. But as history presents itself to us or comes within reach of our intelligence, personality surely is ultimate, though it is of course moulded by antecedent and environment. Had a bullet entered the brain of Cromwell or of William III in his first battle, or had Gustavus not fallen at Lützen, the course of history apparently would have been changed. The course even of science would have been changed if there had not been a Newton or a Darwin. The personality of Napoleon was a tremendous factor, and indeed is so still, since all this militarism is to

a great extent his work ; and who could have predicted its introduction through the annexation of Corsica by France? Let history be as philosophic as you will, the attempt to exclude from it personality would surely be to falsify it by the suppression of a great factor, as well as to deprive it of life.

At the time at which Maine wrote, grandiloquence, nauseous or not, certainly prevailed even in so highly respectable a writer as Bancroft. But this, not only in regard to literature, but in regard to oratory, is now very much a thing of the past. Some traces may occasionally be found. One history, essentially very valuable, lies before us curiously dotted with strained metaphors, through which the reader longs to strike his pen. But it is to be hoped that, while spread-eagle rhetoric is discarded, spirit is not to be banished from the narrative or literary grace from the style. Most readers, after all, require a history which they can read with pleasure, and which easily impresses itself on their minds. Hume and Robertson have long been consigned to disgrace for their want of accurate erudition, especially in relation to the Middle Ages, which to them and their contemporaries were merely the Dark Ages, while to the medievalist of our day they appear to be the special ages of light. But we must not be altogether ungrateful for the literary skill which, by giving us a lively, luminous, and interesting narrative, not only affords us pleasure, but fixes the

leading facts of history in our minds. It would not be difficult to name works, admirable in point of erudition, and regarded by all scholars with profound gratitude, which no ordinary mortal could read, or, if he did read, could possibly remember. If history is to be read, common people must have something less dry.

The impartiality of an American historian is, of course, specially tried in dealing with the American Revolution, and all the subsequent disputes between the United States and Great Britain. Having occasion the other day to inspect the American school histories, about the partial character of which, and their evil influence in keeping up Anglophobia, a good deal has been said, I found nothing so bad as I had been led to expect. It seemed to me that whatever there was of acrimony in the tone had been sensibly diminishing of late years. England, unhappily, is the only foreign nation with which the United States ever waged serious war, and the military records, which in theirs, as in other histories, fill a disproportionate space, are all records of battles by land and sea with us. Nor was it to be expected that American writers would take a less American view of these questions than that which was taken by English Whigs, such as Chatham, Fox, and Burke, at the time of the Revolutionary war. But in the recent American historians, at least those of high reputation, a sincere desire to be impartial or even to be kind to Great Britain will generally be found.

Here and there you come upon what, to an Englishman at least, appears to be Anglophobic injustice. In the interesting series of 'Lives of American Statesmen,' a few such passages will be found; but the best of them, such as Mr Carl Schurz's 'Life of Henry Clay,' are free from anything of the kind. Some of the American historians or biographers—Professor Hosmer for example—write on international questions just as a candid Englishman would write.

A trial now awaits the American historian in his judicial character which it will not be very easy for a native writer to meet. The South is demanding a version of the history of the Civil War rectified in its interest, and fitted to be taught in its schools. As might have been expected, that which was a memory of sorrow to the vanquished is becoming a memory, perhaps a legend, of heroic achievement to their sons. A Northerner must find it difficult to place himself at that which is the Southern, and, perhaps, in a certain sense the right, point of view. To Northerners secession seemed rebellion; and if you asked them for what they were fighting, the general answer would be that they were fighting to make the South submit to the law. Reconstruction proceeded on the same theory, with the untoward result of putting the South under 'carpet-bagging' government, instead of turning it over, as soon as it had fairly submitted, to the guidance of its natural chiefs. Legally this view might be right. The Union, if not national at first, had



become national in course of time, so that formally secession would be rebellion, and the war to which it led would be a civil war. But in reality the war was international, and was in fact so treated from the outset by the North, which never hanged a Southerner for rebellion, or withheld from the Southern soldiery the full measure of belligerent right. Nature, more powerful and authoritative than any constitutional compact, had forced apart, after long, uneasy, and at length insufferable wedlock, two communities radically antagonistic to each other in social structure, and therefore incapable of political union. If one of the two nations formed by the rupture was warranted in attacking and conquering the other, the justification was to be found, not so much in a legal claim to allegiance as in the character of slavery, the danger of its propagation, and the duty owed to the negro. The trophies and statues raised by the North are clearly memorials of international war; civil war has no triumphs. It will be curious to see a Southern history, especially a school history, of the War of Secession.

## X

# THE SCHOLARSHIP OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY HERBERT PAUL

IF I wanted a book to amuse me on a railway journey, I would as soon take Porson's 'Letters to Travis' as any other. The unfortunate Archdeacon to whom they were addressed has been long and justly forgotten. The spuriousness of 1 John v. 7, the famous record of the Three Heavenly Witnesses, has been admitted by all competent critics for a hundred years, though the text continues to be read in Christian Churches as a genuine part of the Epistle. Even if it had been found in all the Greek manuscripts, instead of in none, Travis would have been totally unfit to defend it, or anything else, against a real scholar.

Wherein, then, lies the interest of the book? I answer that it is not controversial but personal, and that the author is a typical example of a profound student, who was also a great man

of letters, freely rolling out his mind. Porson wrote it in the prime of life and the freshness of his powers, before his natural indolence had gained upon him, before he had found consolation for his troubles in the last place where it should be sought. In humour, in learning, in mental power, in sarcasm and irony, in easy command of vivid, racy, vernacular English, he had few equals and no superior. He did not know how to be dull, and if his treatment of ignorance is such as mercy might have induced justice to spare, we must remember that in the ignorance which he attacked there was a large dose of dishonesty. And if Porson gave no more than justice to others, he received far less than justice himself. These very letters are the result of theological studies which he, and he almost alone, thought necessary before he took orders in the Church of England. He convinced himself that he could not take them, and that at a time when Arian clergymen might be counted by the hundred, while schoolmasters and college tutors became deacons and priests as formally and as mechanically as they became bachelors and masters of arts. 'He who puts Christianity before truth,' said the illustrious author of the ecclesiastical revival in the nineteenth century, 'will go on to put the Church before Christianity, and will end by putting himself before the Church.' Porson put truth before everything, and what was his reward? He lost his clerical Fellowship at Trinity because the

Master would not give him a lay one. That exemplary divine advised him to become a parson, and gave the lay Fellowship to his own nephew. Porson was miserably poor. He was sent to Eton and to Cambridge by charity. He was the most acute and erudite scholar in Europe. The noble foundation of Henry the Sixth, the later and larger foundation of Henry the Eighth, cherish his memory with pride. But the official head of his own college, a minister of the Church of Christ, told him, with a cynical leer, to be a hypocrite or starve. His stipend as Professor of Greek was forty pounds a year. If he had been a clergyman, he would have become a Canon of Ely and a comparatively rich man.

It was hardly to be expected that Porson would treat with much indulgence a professional apologist of orthodoxy who could not be made to understand an argument, and who thought collating manuscripts the same thing as collecting them. If he sometimes made fun of Mr Travis, and referred him to the authority of the celebrated manual *Dormi Secure* (Sleep Soundly), the temptation must have been irresistible, especially as Mr Travis would never see the joke for himself. But, as Macaulay said, when one praises an author one should give specimens of his wares. I will not quote from the criticism of Gibbon in the preface, because every undergraduate, if not every schoolboy, knows it. The following passage may, perhaps, not be equally familiar :—‘ Having

at last discussed the subjects of Stephens' and Beza's orthodox manuscripts, I am compelled to decide (with sorrow I pronounce it!) that they have disappeared; perhaps they were too good for this world, and, therefore, are no longer visible on earth. However, I advise the true believers not to be dejected; for, since all things lost from earth are treasured up in the lunar sphere, they may rest assured that these valuable relics are safely deposited in a snug corner of the moon, fit company for Constantine's donation, Orlando's wits, and Mr Travis' learning.' Constantine's donation was the alleged present of the Western Empire to the Bishop of Rome, which would indeed have been splendid if it had been made. 'Mr Travis' arguments are like the Sibyl's books: they contain information of equal truth, and they increase in value by the diminution of quantity.' Of Cyprian he says:—'The merits of the martyr threw a shade over the defects of the author, and the veneration that ought to have been confined to his piety was extended to his writings.' It is impossible not to be reminded of Gibbon. But I venture to say that the comparison will not be unfavourable to Porson. Gibbon's sentences would have been longer, less direct, and more offensive. Nor was Porson's style corrupted by Gallicisms. He always wrote idiomatic English, and in writing he always aimed straight at the mark. 'I pay no compliment to De Missy when I say that he had a clearer and more critical head



than Cyprian.' It would be difficult to kill two birds more neatly with one stone.

Porson was not merely the greatest classical scholar since the death of Bentley. He was acquainted with English literature as few classical scholars at that time were. He knew Shakespeare as we should all like to know him, and the New Testament as we all ought to know it—that is to say, by heart. Even Byron never made a better Shakespearian quotation than Porson flung contemptuously at that typically bad scholar, Gilbert Wakefield, who presumed to criticise his edition of the *Hecuba* of Euripides—'What's *Hecuba* to him, or he to *Hecuba*?' He was saturated with Milton, Dryden, and Pope. He was an omnivorous and retentive reader, whose vast knowledge was at his fingers' ends. There are modern professors who despise him because he said that life was too short to learn German. I will not ask whether it is possible to be the worse for German. There are, as Porson knew to his cost, more pernicious forms of excess. When he applied to Hermann the well-known epigram of Phocylides, he perhaps betrayed a patriotic bias. On the other hand, if his eye had been accustomed to the atrocities of the German printing-press, he would not have carried out his wholesome reform in the construction of Greek type.

The 'Letters to Travis' illustrate the leisurely scholarship of the eighteenth century in the careless profusion with which they are written. Porson does not husband his strength, or keep half his

good things for another time. He might have confuted Travis in a letter, almost in a page. He gives him twelve letters and exhausts the subject. But he does much more. He exhibits the principles of sound criticism, the nature of historic and literary evidence. He shows by the example which we were all taught in youth to regard as better than precept how the authority of manuscripts should be weighed, when silence is a proof of ignorance, how a marginal gloss gets into the text, under what conditions a theologian may be assumed to have used the best evidence at his disposal. In a treatise of this comprehensive sort the particular dispute assumes its due proportions, and is dwarfed by the splendid lesson in criticism which gives its permanent value to Porson's work. This is doubly fortunate ; for it is by the letters alone that the general reader can judge of Porson at all. Fragments of his brilliant conversation ('Wonderful poet, Mr Southey ; his poetry will be read when Homer and Virgil are forgotten') have been preserved. He delivered no lectures at Cambridge ; he would have been thought eccentric if he had. He wrote political squibs for the *Morning Chronicle*, but daily journalism is the most perishable of all commercial products. He edited four Greek plays, but his notes are critical of the text, and not explanatory of the meaning. He said himself that he was quite content to be known as one Porson who at the close of the eighteenth century did something for the text of Euripides. He also did a great deal to

make Athenæus intelligible. He has been unlucky in his biographer, a clergyman who murdered Lucretius and translated his wife. By far the best account of him is Professor Jebb's admirable article in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' which is really perfect, but, of course, tantalisingly brief. His brave, sad, and too brief career may almost be summed up in a sentence. He was the martyr of honesty and the slave of drink.



## XI

### A LEAF FROM AN INN ALBUM

BY THE EARL OF CREWE

**A**MONG 'books which are no books'—though he mentioned such various harvest of the human mind as Court Calendars, Draught Boards bound and lettered at the back, Statutes at large, the works of Hume and Gibbon, and 'block-headed Encyclopædias' generally—Charles Lamb did not happen to include Inn Albums and Visitors' Books. It is possible that the kindly critic may have judged with tolerance the efforts of mild sentiment and milder humour which crowd their pages, and that he therefore purposely left them out of his list: be this as it may, to the ordinary observer their chief interest lies in the singular revelation they present of a dreadful fact not commonly recognised. They make it evident that about one person in five believes that he or she is capable of some form of literary composition worthy of being set down and preserved. Allowing for a little modesty in the remaining four, one is tempted to wonder if there



is any man or woman alive who is not an author in secret, and to thank Heaven that in literature free coinage is unknown, and that only these humble mints, the Visitors' Books, remain always open. And though the better educated of these *commis-voyageurs* Troubadours would not admit it, they are but the genteeler cousins-german of those other travellers who carve their names on the temple of Luxor, or treat Vatican statues in a manner which argues a contempt for graven images worthy of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

A leaf, then, from an Inn Album—

page on page of gratitude  
for breakfast, dinner, supper and the view,

is not a promising subject ; but the particular leaf in question has a certain interest of its own. In a copy of Shelley's 'Revolt of Islam' (London, 1818)—once the property of that industrious collector, the Rev. John Mitford, and annotated in his delicate handwriting—is inserted what he describes as 'A page from the Journal Book of Chamouny in Switzerland,' containing a somewhat notorious entry.

During the summer of 1816, Shelley, with Mary Godwin and her half-sister Jane or Claire Clairmont, left his Windsor retreat for Switzerland. It was in a large measure Jane Clairmont's expedition, for Byron was at Geneva ; and though her fellow-travellers suspected nothing, she had already introduced herself to Byron, under pretence of seeking

a Drury Lane engagement, and had flung herself into his not unwilling arms.

The intercourse between Byron and Shelley at Diodati and on Lake Lemman furnishes one of the most interesting passages in the lives of English men of letters ; Byron, however, was not of the party which started for Chamouni towards the end of July. According to Professor Dowden's account (*Life of Shelley*, Vol. II., p. 29), the travellers, after an ineffectual attempt to view the Mer de Glace on July the 24th, succeeded in reaching Montanvert on the following day, and 'before they left Montanvert the travellers' Album had received in unusual form, but one not to be mistaken, the sign-manual of P. B. Shelley.' The entry, however, bears the date July the 23rd, and therefore Mitford may have been right in supposing it to have been made at Chamouni, though the writer in the *Quarterly Review*, to be quoted presently, seems to have been of Professor Dowden's opinion.

The leaf in question is of rough blue-grey paper, foolscap size, and shows evidence of having been cut from a book, as a word or two is missing from each line on the inner margin. It is ruled by hand into vertical divisions headed respectively 'jours, mois, noms des voyageurs, lieu de naissance et profession, d'ous ils viennent, ou ils sont dirigé, observations.' Both sides of the paper are full of names, and many of the travellers have contributed in various languages to the column of observations. There is nothing very striking in the list ; the

Shelley names are immediately followed by those of The Mackintosh and his wife, and one wonders what the Highland magnates thought of the poet and his companions. Then follows Lord Darlington, with some members of his family, and 'Newby Lowson, Esq.'—a Wagg or Wenham perhaps—against whose name somebody has pencilled, 'A Curious fellow this.' Lord Darlington, afterwards first Duke of Cleveland, famous in the hunting and racing world of his time—

Darlington's peer

With his chin sticking out and his cap on one ear—

was also a curious fellow in his way, and if he objected to the Shelley *ménage* it could not have been upon moral grounds. Later comes a vast family of Hales, against whom the inevitable buffoon has written 'All Hale!! *vide* Mackbeth,' and then a gentleman, unknown to fame, but who sounds like a specimen of those who in their way, too, have helped to make England great, 'John Pycroft—English—Lausanne to Geneva—and no poet.'

At the top of Shelley's page is the latter part of what was evidently a long, fervid, and ill-expressed outpouring of religious thankfulness inspired by the grandeur of the surroundings. The writer's name does not appear. Professor Dowden is surely right in his surmise that it was this well-intended but tasteless exhibition of conventional piety which excited Shelley to his expression of revolt ; but it

may be added that he was by no means the only protester, and certainly not the rudest. One commentator has scrawled 'Methodist—what nonsense,' in the margin; and another inquires, 'Why are people anxious to make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of everybody?' While a third has written on a mutilated part of the sheet, but seems to declare that 'any one listening to this nonsense must be a complete *gudgion*!'

The Shelley entry runs thus:—

Percy B. Shelley—(lieu de naissance) Sussex—(ou ils sont dirigé) L'enfer—(observations) *ειμι φιλανθρωπος, δημοκρατικος τ' αθεος τε.*

Next comes M. W. G. (Mary Wollstoncraft Godwin), born in London, coming from England, and bound for the same unpleasant destination as Shelley.

The third entry, Madlle. C. C. (Claire Clairmont)—(lieu de naissance) Clifton.

In his notice of the incident, Professor Dowden (Vol. II., p. 30) states:—

A third comer, it is said, added the word *μωρός*, and Byron, on visiting Montanvert, defaced Shelley's *atheist* and his successor's *fool*.

This account, founded, as the writer tells us, on Mr Swinburne's recollection of the original document, is not quite accurate. Under Shelley's declaration a later traveller has written, from Psalm liii. v. 1:—

*ὁ ἄφρων εἶπεν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ, οὐκ ἔστι θεός.*

Unlike Shelley, he has carefully added his ac-

cents, and, to point his moral, has heavily underlined the Greek word rendered in our version *fool*, and the name *Percy B. Shelley*—who said in his heart there is no God. Professor Dowden continues (p. 30, note):—

We hear nothing of the *μωρός* from Lord Broughton, who was present on the occasion of Byron's discovering Shelley's entry in the visitors' book. 'At an inn on the road,' he writes, 'the travellers' book was put before us, and Lord Byron, having written his name, pointed out to me the name of Mr Shelley, with the words 'atheist' and 'philanthropist' written in Greek opposite to it, and observing, "Do you not think I shall do Shelley a service by scratching this out?" he defaced the words with great care.' ('Italy, Remarks made in Several Visits, etc.,' Vol. I., pp. 1-2.)

Either Lord Broughton's memory failed on the precise detail of what happened, or Byron purposely misled him, for no attempt has been made to deface either Shelley's writing or his critic's. But a tolerably successful effort has been made to efface the entry of Claire Clairmont's initials, and to a less extent the word 'Clifton,' so that it is only just possible to make out the 'Madlle. C. C.' In this light it is not difficult to amend Lord Broughton's story. Byron would scarcely trouble himself greatly over Shelley's extravagance, but at this time he had long been estranged from Claire, and was just the man to erase anything that reminded him of a disagreeable and discreditable episode, in which he had played, not merely a loose, but a heartless part.

That Allegra's mother should have been described as 'Madlle.' a few months before her child was born may or may not have contributed to the



deletion. It does not seem to be clear, from any information to be obtained elsewhere, why Clifton should have been written opposite Claire Clairmont's name.

Such was Shelley's foolish, bitter jest—bad Greek, and bad taste. It might well have passed unnoticed by the world, but an article in the *Quarterly Review* (No. xxxvi., Jan. 1818, 'Foliage,' by Leigh Hunt) seems to show that a comment upon it was expected to be intelligible to ordinary readers. After allusion to the audacities of Laon and Cythna, to Shelley's expulsion from Oxford, and to his domestic troubles, the Reviewer proceeds:—

If we were told of a man, who, placed on a wild rock among the clouds, yet even in that height surrounded by a loftier amphitheatre of spire-like mountains hanging over a valley of eternal ice and snow, where the roar of mighty waterfalls was at times unheeded from the hollow and more appalling thunder of the unseen avalanche—if we were told of a man who then witnessing the sublimest assemblage of natural objects, should retire to the cabin near and write *ἀθεός* after his name in the album, we hope our own feeling would be pity rather than disgust; but we should think it imbecility to court that man's friendship, or to celebrate his intellect or his heart as the wisest or warmest of the age.

Shelley's fame has long outlived any possibility of abatement owing to the most high-flown or most excusable reproofs from Quarterly Reviewers and their kind; and perhaps the wisest course is to read 'Mont Blanc,' and to forget all about the Inn Album. Which seems to show that this paper had better not have been written.



## XII

### BYSSHE: A DIALOGUE

BY JOHN OLIVER HOBBS

‘**I** LIKE Hamlet,’ confessed Bysshe. ‘Goethe and Victor Hugo have tried everything, but Shakespeare has said everything. Humanity, in his plays, is set before us as perfectly and more delightfully than Nature. He eliminates the lie from the fact, whereas Nature is always obliged to give the lie as well. There’s a good deal in that old doctrine of Original Sin. Again, in the sixteenth century, that spleeny Luther had not yet jaundiced all the poetry of the world. My comfort is that Shakespeare felt the malady approaching, and broke the magic staff, and drowned the book of inspiration, in time. Prospero’s abjuration in *The Tempest*—(there’s a tragedy for you!)—is but a sad farewell to his enthusiasm—to that wisdom which Socrates possessed till the end, and called a dream, which we would fain possess, and call Romance! In our days enthusiasm is regarded as the virtue of dupes, and distinguished modern

writers at home and abroad have every literary gift except that essential one—you may call it by another name, if you like—piety.'

At this point Adolphus Simnel, who had met Flaubert and was not insensible to that distinction, asked :

'What has piety to do with literary art?'

'This,' replied Bysshe. 'It is impossible for an impious—and therefore selfish—mind to possess that genial humour which is inseparable from a sound judgment, or to understand Irony, which, as you will admit, makes the strength of tragedy, the gaiety of comedy, the pathos of life, and the whole business of metaphysic.'

'Good Lord!' ejaculated Adolphus Simnel.

'You could not call on a better Critic!' returned the elderly amateur Bysshe. 'But to resume. Had your infinitely accomplished friend, the late M. Flaubert, enjoyed the grace of piety, he would have been as great a humorist as Cervantes! Madame Bovary, poor creature, is Don Quixote all over again—with a difference.'

'This,' said Simnel, 'is enormous! Yet it has something in it to interest the imagination. Pray go on.'

'I am not an author,' continued Bysshe. 'I am nothing more nor less than an absurd person, yet whenever I read a book I ask myself the question, "How ought one to write of human beings? In an idealistic way or in a natural way?" All men are engaged either on this side or that. I think, and

I believe I have the world with me here, that the idealist is right. I will explain why. Before one can idealise life one must have triumphed over it. The idealist is the master of his material, whereas the naturalist must ever be its slave. Don Quixote is the man who conquers, because he looks above the baseness of appearances. Madame Bovary is neither man nor woman, but a tortured egoism, perishing horridly of disappointments because the world cannot give that intoxication which—to do it justice—it has never promised. In one case we see the strength of ideals, in the other, the weakness of lies. Compare the work of these two men of genius. You will see how much they have in common, yet how differently they bear the trials of existence. The Man has taught us sympathy and courage; the Temperament has tried to teach us hatred and despair. All sane young people read Cervantes with pleasure, while they recoil from Flaubert in dismay.'

'Dear soul,' said Simnel, 'Flaubert felt, with an exquisite anguish, the fatuity, the ignorance, the odiousness, the imbecility, the stale immorality, the degradation of the self-satisfied intolerable middle-classes. He was a great artist. He wrote for ten or twelve persons only.'

'When I think,' said Bysshe, 'that Almighty God was willing to come down from Heaven, and sit anywhere, in order to tell a lot of vulgar people the most perfect little stories in all creation—I refer to the Parables—I own that I cannot tolerate



the gifted beings who can only bring themselves to address a little circle who are not, by-the-bye, especially anxious to be addressed.'

'Flaubert,' said Adolphus Simnel, 'had a great admiration for the Evangelists, for Cervantes, and, indeed, for most of those old Masters. But, as he remarked so well, they write very badly. I am getting to like them, but it is impossible to take their work, as the *bourgeois* do, prodigiously *au sérieux*. What do you think, Mrs Carillon?'

'Well, dear Madame Sand was quite, quite different,' replied Mrs Carillon. 'She wrote because it was her profession to write. There are ten thousand ways of being impressive. She had but one; and meditation, to such a sensibility, was useless. She was a great child, without logic and without training, with an incomparable gift of language and a boundless human charity. She could love marionettes and poets, she could stir up revolutions and study botany. She could teach her grandchildren the alphabet, and inform Flaubert, with her own simplicity, that, after all his pains, she was still his superior in literary style.'

'She was, no doubt,' said Bysshe, 'a woman more to be remembered than most, and, beyond question, the finest babbler that the republic of letters has so far produced. But, dear lady, she babbled consummate nonsense, dangerous nonsense, and sometimes the sort of nonsense called *inconvenable*.'

'True,' said Mrs Carillon, 'yet she was so extra-

ordinarily kind. She had many passions, but not a single vice. Now I have read every line of Flaubert, not once, but often. The more I read him the less I agree with him, yet I can never leave him without crying. He does not seem a soul in bliss, but a soul in the other state . . . or almost. . . . 'The tears I have shed over "Bouvard and Pécuchet"—the tears!'

She moved, as she spoke, to the piano, and, sitting before it, played the first bars of 'Tristan und Isolde.'

Said Bysshe, 'Nevertheless, I like Hamlet!'



### XIII

## KEYS TO THE UNIVERSE

BY VERNON LEE

OVER one of the outer portals of the Alhambra is engraved, as the traveller will remember, a large, enigmatic key. I had reason to believe, at one time, that it was the key unlocking the Treasure-house of King Yahya and the subterranean palace of his enchanted daughter; and I even communicated this view, at considerable length, to the readers of the *Journal des Débats*. But I have waxed mystical, like the rest of us, of late, and so I now think that the key on the horse-shoe portal has nothing to do with treasures or infantas, and is simply a symbolic 'Key to the Universe.'

In our salad days books are very often 'Keys to the Universe'; and it is on this pretext that I am allowed to mention the subject of them in these pages. We can all of us remember having thought that the reading of some particular book, or set of books, would act as an Open Sesame admitting us to the terraces and pinnacles of thought whence all things human and divine would be discernible, map-like and clear, at our feet. For some the books have been books on philosophy; for others,

books on political economy ; for Petrarch, as we know, the book was Homer in Greek, which he kept by him and could not read. For the writer of these lines, I am ashamed to say that the key to the universe resided at one time in a treatise on thorough bass, perhaps owing to an insuperable difficulty in grasping whether progression by fourths was extremely desirable or absolutely forbidden. But whatever the books, I think it is certain that no reader of them ever found that they opened any such door as he expected. Indeed, it seems probable that if books ever do act as keys to the universe, or to the smallest pigeon-hole of the universe, it is probably the books which have not been expected to do anything of the kind, and even those of which we have suspected it only long after. For we have a way of looking, so to speak, for the universe on the wrong side, as we look sometimes, in a shuttered room, for a window on the side where there is only dead wall ; and we do not always recognise the universe when we get a glimpse of it. And yet that *was* the universe, perhaps the only universe (all the rest vanity and delusion) we shall ever really enter in the spirit, that land of Cockayne into which we were admitted by some line of poetry, some despised boys' book of adventure.

From which statement it may be gathered that I tend to believe that the only universe we can ever really know is the universe which we know not through processes of induction or deduction,



but through thoroughgoing enjoyment or weary longing or bitter grief. For the universe whose key we each of us seek for is a subjective universe, composed of those elements of our own experience which are nearest akin to ourselves. This is obscure, so I proceed to explain.

It struck me the other day, at the mention of a well-known firm of solicitors, that, in the eyes of a certain friend of mine, these gentlemen undoubtedly hold the key to the universe. Unformulated to himself, my friend feels that what Messrs Blank & Co. know, explains, or might explain, the problems of life which, to his temper of mind, are the most far-reaching, the secret of the world's how and why. To his temper of mind; but not to the temper of mind of some other person, who may have the same sort of feeling for, say, the nerve-doctor, or the mystic theologian, or the dealer in statistics. Indeed, it is in this exclusively individual quality that lies the interest and utility of these various views; each individual's key to the universe being in fact a key to his personality.

But before developing this theme, allow me to open a parenthesis to state that the key to the universe is not by any means the key, necessarily, to any particular thing which we, individually, require to know for practical purposes. In that sense every teacher is perpetually turning a key which is beyond the grasp of his pupil; and every successful man of business, official, soldier, sailor,

or candlestick-maker is doing the same, surrounded by hopeless mystery, before the eyes of his unsuccessful competitors ; let alone (and here the key seems almost a literal reality) the fortunate man or woman of the world, before whom all doors open by unfathomable agency ! But such persons are not those who worry about the key to the universe, or about the universe at all. Nay, it is not the key to the universe which is being puzzled about by the fond mother and the humble, unrequited lover, much as they may wonder about the nature of certain keys (and such wonder is surely among the most pathetic things in the world) : ‘ How does that quite uninteresting school friend, that booby with his silly jokes, get to the soul of my boy—the soul which is closed to me ? ’ or ‘ how (alas ! ) can the frivolous fingers of such a woman turn the locks in my hero’s breast ? ’ Those are the keys, not of the universe, but of what concerns us much more closely, the keys of other people’s hearts. But ’tis a subject almost too melancholy to touch upon. Besides, it involves one of the chief aspects of the problem of evil, to wit : Why love and confidence are so oddly distributed in the world, and why the people who could are so rarely allowed to help each other along. This comes under the heading of the universe (by which means I close my parenthesis), and the key of the section is held in turns, by Mother Church, by the late Schopenhauer, and by —.

The key to the universe has, *per se*, nothing

necessarily tragic about it. It is interesting, as I remarked, not because it produces dramatic commotions, but because it is one of the best indications afforded of the most deep down and essential peculiarities of individual character—peculiarities which the uniformities of education usually overlay, and the accidents of life chaotically jumble. Now the stuff of which an individual character consists, its real inherent spontaneous organic tissue, is, so to speak, a sample of one of the forces of Nature. For, as many as there are such varieties of human stuff, each with its own inevitable modes of absorbing, rejecting, of decomposing, and sometimes of exploding—so many (but multiplied by each other) are the contingencies and complications of human existence. Now, in my sense of the word, the key to the universe, conceived by A as in the hand of B, is the indication of the real disinterested, irrational (and therefore irresistible) interests, curiosities, and biases of A. Take for instance the persons to whom severally (and with much depreciation of all the others) the key to the universe is in the keeping of Carlyle, or Browning, or Renan, or Ruskin, or Tolstoi, or Ibsen. . . . And thus invoking impartially each and all of these great names, let the present writer withdraw, hazarding the opinion that in literature, as in all else, appreciation, rather than criticism, is one of the chief keys to the universe.



## XIV

### AN ARAB CLASSIC

BY STANLEY LANE-POOLE

THE Arabs had a curious and effective manner of reviewing. In the Time of Ignorance, before the advent of the blessed Prophet, the poets of the desert submitted their verses to the judgment of their countrymen assembled at the great annual Fair which served as the Olympia of their race. The protagonists of the rival tribes were carefully masked, lest winged words should be followed by less metaphorical arrows, and their poems were impartially recited by a Public Orator. The acclamation of the multitude decided the event, and the clan whose poet won the Arabian substitute for the bays immediately indulged in feasting and self-glorification. The discovery of a tribal poet was a source of pride scarcely excelled by the birth of a son to their chief or the foaling of their favourite mare. In Mohammedan times the criticism of authors was conducted in an equally public manner.



When a man had produced something he thought particularly good, he hastened to the Mosque to share it with his critics. He was sure to find them there, doctors learned in the law, poets, commentators, seated cross-legged on their carpets in the arched porticos round the court, expounding the refinements of style to a circle of squatting students. To this audience he would recite his latest achievement, proud but tremulous. It must have been a searching ordeal, for the listeners were some of them rivals, and all of them keen critics, on the alert for the least flaw, the slightest halt in the rhythm, the smallest lapse from the purity of the classical idiom. They had, too, a way of expressing their opinions which was more forcible than kind. There was a hot debate, much citing of precedents and quoting of the Masters, exploring of memory, and examination of texts. The new comer defended his diction and produced his authorities ; the rest cut him up in remorseless verbal vivisection. It was *Athanasius contra mundum*, and the extraordinary thing is, not that Athanasius survived and went on writing, but that he sometimes profited by the heckling of his critics, was actually convinced of his sins, and amended his ways ; which, as an experienced reviewer will perceive, is absurd.

It is true, nevertheless ; and an authentic example lies before me, in the book called 'The Assemblies of Harîri.' Humiliating as it is, I am aware that I shall be instantly confronted

with the question, Who or what was Harîri? Was it a town, or a man, or a tribe, or a cult? I can only reply that an Oriental gentleman with any pretence to polite scholarship would as soon confess his ignorance of Harîri as an English gentleman fifty years ago would have admitted that he could not quote Horace. Both these ideals are passing away, yet to the educated Arab the 'Assemblies' are still the sum and perfection of literary form, and even Europeans have fallen under their spell. Rückert imitated them with poetic ingenuity in German; and the late Professor Dieterici would sometimes wander into a friend's room in a vague ecstasy and explain that he had been 'meandering in the delicious mazes of the flowery gardens of Harîri.' For nearly eight centuries his '*Makâmât*' have been regarded (to cite a scarcely less fervent disciple, the late Mr Chenery) as, 'next to the Koran, the chief treasure of the Arabic tongue. Contemporaries and posterity have vied in their praises of him. His "Assemblies" have been commented with infinite learning and labour in Andalusia and on the banks of the Oxus. His poetry has been sung at the feasts of the great, and by the camel drivers in the desert. To appreciate his marvellous eloquence, to fathom his profound learning, to understand his varied and endless allusions have always been the highest object of the literary, wherever the Arabic language has been scientifically studied.' The extraordinary difficulties and refinements of his style

have made its skilful translation, as it were, the philosopher's stone of Orientalists, and Mr Chenery's version, with its exhaustive commentary, is among the many services which that admirable scholar unobtrusively rendered to learning.

El-Harîri belonged to the critical, artificial, imitative period of Arabic literature. The time of Creation was past, when the early desert poets composed those 'Golden' Odes and 'Linked' Kasîdas, which tradition long believed were suspended, to their eternal glory, on the walls of the holy Kaaba at Mecca. The age of Recollection had followed, when to recite the classic verse was esteemed better than to compose anything new, and when Hammâd exerted his prodigious memory by declaiming at a sitting two thousand nine hundred poems, a hundred rhyming with each of the twenty-nine letters of the alphabet, till the Caliph Welîd was prostrated with listening to them. It became the ambition of the man of letters to model his style closely upon classical examples; to treasure up rare phrases, peculiar grammatical constructions, recondite allusions, curious metaphors; to play upon the sounds and meanings of words, and to test the wits of his hearers by the obscurity of the *double entente*. Artificial as such compositions must be, they have had their fascination in most literatures, especially for the nicest scholars, whose critical taste and learned apparatus found free play in such conceits. Harîri was of this sort—a man of immense literary

resources, remarkable critical powers, yet of narrow intellectual vision. 'He spied out defects with the microscopic eye of an insect, but the merits which he prized were nice and contracted also.'

His birthplace encouraged his intellectual temperament. He was born of Arab stock at Basra in 1055, and died there in 1122. He celebrates his native city as the place where 'the ship and the camel meet, the seafish and the lizard.' But besides being the chief Mesopotamian mart for the commerce between east and west, Basra was the home of literary subtlety; where, more than anywhere else under the Caliphate, there was everlasting 'grinding at grammar,' making of anagrams, devising of conceits, and all manner of poetastical pedantry. When one of its most famous scholars lay dying, his friends gathered round to catch his last wishes; but the learned Sibawaih could only gasp out, 'There is something on my mind concerning the particle *hatta*!' —One thinks of him who

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *ḍe*,  
Dead from the waist down.

Bred up in this straitest sect of the grammarians, Harîrî's undoubted genius for style was polished to its finest edge, and his learning was widened to the bounds of the scholarly horizon. His greatest work, the 'Assemblies,' is indeed (as Dr Steingass has well observed) an encyclopædia of the scholarship of his time and race, set forth in language

saturated with the idioms of the classical poets, the Koran, and the proverbs of the desert. It is this which makes it so valuable a text-book for the student of Arabic. Here he will find poetry, history, antiquities, theology, law ; he will be introduced to every branch of Mohammedan learning ; whilst for niceties of grammar, rhetoric, and lexicology he could have no surer guide. Dr Steingass has conferred a great benefit on students by the publication of a convenient text of the 'Assemblies of Harîri' elucidated by very necessary notes, based upon the labours of Sacy and Chenery, whose translation he has also completed.

It is difficult, no doubt, for most Westerns to appreciate the beauties of this celebrated classic. There is no cohesion, no connecting idea, between the fifty separate 'Assemblies,' beyond the regular re-appearance of an egregious Tartufe, called Abu-Zeyd, a Bohemian of brilliant parts and absolutely no conscience, who consistently extracts alms from assemblies of people in various cities, by preaching eloquent discourses of the highest piety and morality, and then goes off with his spoils to indulge secretly in triumphant and unhallowed revels. Preston has summed up the intellectual character of this fascinating hero of the 'Assemblies':— 'Eloquent and erratic, like the hero of the Odyssey, roaming from place to place with no means of support except his marvellous powers of language, nor any object except the display of them, restless if without an opportunity of exerting them, but care-



less from the very confidence of success about employing them in a settled direction, devoting them sometimes to the noblest and sometimes to the meanest purposes, yet never losing sight of the dignity of their possession, but applying them to foil the learned, to cajole the simple, to baffle the powerful, and to defraud the humane.'

Even in this framework there is no attempt at originality ; it is borrowed from Hamadhâni, the 'Wonder of the Age.' The excellence lies in the perfect finish : the matter is nothing ; the charm consists in the form alone. Yet this form is, to English readers, exotic and artificial. Among its special merits, in the eyes of Easterns, is the perpetual employment of rhymed prose. To us this is apt to seem at once monotonous and strained, with its antithetic balance in sense, and jingle of sound ; but to the Arabs ; as to many primitive peoples, either rhyming or assonant prose was from early times a natural mode of impassioned and impressive speech. It is the mode adopted constantly and without strain in the Koran, and it is the mode into which an historian, such as Ibn-el-Athîr, falls naturally when he waxes eloquent over a great victory or a famous deed. The Arabic language, with its mathematical regularity of structure and resulting assonances, lends itself easily to this art of expression, and what to us seems laboured and affected was undoubtedly produced without effort by the writer ; indeed, it is the commonest thing to hear the weekly sermon

in the mosque delivered *ex tempore* in rhyming prose.

But if we do not care for rhymed prose, there is plenty besides in Harîri to minister to varied tastes. In these wonderful 'Assemblies' we shall find every kind of literary form, except the shambling and the vulgar. Pagan rhetoric, Muslim exhortation, simple verse, elaborate ode, everything that the immeasurable flexibility of the Arabic tongue and the curious art of a fastidious scholar could achieve—all is here, and we may take our choice. But the strangest thing about Harîri was his profession. The greatest master of Arabic style in the Middle Ages was a *Sâhib al-Khabar*. Now *Sâhib al-Khabar*, being freely interpreted, means—our own correspondent!

## XV

### UNCONSCIOUS MAGIC

BY ARTHUR MACHEN

THE facsimile page of Lord Tennyson's handwriting in the second volume of the 'Memoir' gives us some curious information as to the symbolism of the 'Idylls.' By the 'Round Table,' it seems, we are to understand 'Liberal Institutions,' and it must be confessed that to some of us the interpretation is not a little terrifying. No doubt the poet would not have had us take his words in their strictly literal sense; we are not for the future to read into his lines references to Equal Electoral Districts, Payment of Members and the County Council, but from the high and mystic order of the Round Table to 'Liberal Institutions' in their mildest form there is surely a frightful and abominable descent. I may admit at once that Tennyson never meant us to associate a 'Program' of any kind with Lancelot; that we are free to enjoy the session of the holy knights without a thought of Local Veto; and yet, when every allow-

ance has been made, those of us who had dreamed of something ineffable beneath the sacrament of the words are left chilled and desolate by the poet's explanation. We will give the most favourable gloss to the phrase, and confess how good and joyful a thing it is that brethren should dwell together in unity, under equal laws, ruled by noble kings, while freedom broadens slowly down from precedent to precedent ; but still, I, for one, must say at the last that I have lost my earlier heaven. Wordsworth could be prosaic, even to absolute bathos, but he never paraphrased 'heaven lies about us in our infancy' by 'wholesome maternal influences surround us in our childhood.' Let us make the distinction once for all ; the important things of life are to the poets foolishness ; freedom, justice, equal laws, all that lights the cheerful glow of our household fires, are but dead ashes when we look through the magic casements and behold the knights arrayed, and the glory streaming from the Vessel of the Grail. We do not wish to be told then that the Magic Bark symbolises increased facilities of locomotion. Clearly, if Tennyson knew what he meant we are betrayed and undone ; while we thought the poet had been chanting to us of certain awful and hidden things, he has really been expounding the principles of an amiable Whiggery ; the enchanted towers of Carbonek shrivel up into a Mechanics' Institute.

But did Tennyson know what he meant ? The question sounds an impertinence, but it must be

asked quite seriously not only of Tennyson, but of many other great writers. Perhaps if we could have examined Cervantes and asked him the true significance of the 'Don Quixote,' he would have told us in all sobriety that it was nothing more than a satire on the foolish books of Knight-errantry then in fashion. It seems highly probable that he would have made some such answer; throughout his book he insists that his object was merely to reform a current perversity of literary taste. And Rabelais too—he would not have hesitated, we may be sure, if one could have taken him apart and inquired into the meaning of his magic-lantern visions, as Coleridge calls them. He would have remembered the evil days in the convent of Fontenay-le-Comte, the ignorance, the bigotry, the brutality of the Greyfriars, and no doubt he would have replied that in 'Gargantua' and 'Pantagruel' he had wished to express his hatred of 'clericalism' and monks and monastic rules. Sterne set out on 'Tristram Shandy' with the idea of laughing at some local enemies; Dickens tells how he began 'Pickwick' in order that Seymour might have a text for his pictures of Cockney sportsmen, how he continued it so that bribery and corruption at elections, unscrupulous attorneys, and Fleet Prison should be no more. Hawthorne was in a way a conscious mystic, but it is doubtful whether he realised how small a part is borne by the moral tragedy in the grand achievement of the 'Scarlet Letter.'



Did they know what they meant? I will return to my first example of the late poet laureate with his 'Liberal Institutions,' and so far as he and his symbolism are concerned, I answer 'No' at once, and without hesitation. It is true that we cannot say in words what we seek as we go down to Camelot, we know not how it may be when the trumpet sounds and the Knights of the Round Table are gathered together, we bow in silence at the Elevation of the Grail. It does not yet appear what these things signify. But we do know that while we read the 'Idylls' our attitude of mind is wholly mystical, that our hearts lie stilled under enchantment, that we are never troubled by the thought of any 'institutions,' however valuable such things may be in themselves. To us, indeed, it must seem astounding that Tennyson should resolve our doubts in such a manner, but our amazement would perhaps be less if we could have breathed the atmosphere of the 'thirties with the poet. Then, as in the early time of Wordsworth and Coleridge, as through all the days of Shelley, 'poetical' and 'political' seemed almost synonymous adjectives, and Mr Snodgrass, the 'great poet,' spoke quite in character when he alluded to the Revolution of July as 'that glorious scene.' They thought highly of 'Freedom' in those days, not quite knowing what they meant, not at all understanding that the word usually stands for jobbery and corruption of the most offensive sort, and perhaps the mistiness of the conception made

it glamorous and poetical. I am thankful that Keats did not explain his poetry. Perhaps if he had done so he would have told us that by 'faëry lands forlorn' he meant to signify the countries oppressed by the Holy Alliance and the Roman Pontiff.

And perhaps the case becomes stronger if I leave Tennyson and pass to others. For though we have the unimpeachable evidence of the poet's handwriting as to the fact of his interpretation, yet I, at all events, cannot quite believe that the Parliamentary ideal was in his mind as he wrote the great lines of the 'Idylls.' It was probably an afterthought, or perhaps a forethought, but not the palmary thought of the creative moment. With Cervantes, however, it is different. Again and again he interrupts the splendid passage of his knight to assure the reader that he means no more than a little satire—that his only object is to write down those tedious romances of chivalry. In literature all things are conjectural, but, if anything is certain, one may be sure that Cervantes meant 'Don Quixote' to be a burlesque on Amadis and Belianis, and the rest of them; he intended the best book in profane letters to be a 'skit,' as we should call it. It will be hardly necessary to show at length how much more the author accomplished, how utterly nonsensical is the line about laughing Spain's chivalry away. To me it seems that Cervantes distilled as into a quintessence all the marvel and wonder and awe of chivalry; that even

the 'Morte d'Arthur' is contained in 'Don Quixote' as the less in the greater; that this masterpiece is one of those books written within and without. To the gross eye, to the formal understanding, it is a witty history of comic misadventure, but the elect listen through its golden pages to the winding of King Arthur's magic horn, to the chant of the choir that guards the Grail.

My original question was, perhaps, too harshly framed; I will not ask 'Did they know what they meant?' but rather inquire as to how far the fine and rare effects of literature were consciously devised and produced. As has been stated, there cannot be much doubt as to the intention of Rabelais in inventing his extraordinary book. He willed to run a tilt at things in general—to please the vulgar with vulgar words and obscene tales—but, above all, to render the Church and the monks hateful and contemptible. And how little this counts with the enlightened Rabelaisian of to-day. It is true that the baser bookseller catalogues the volume with 'Maria Monk' and 'Fast Life in Paris'; it is true that the more inept critics are not resolved whether Brother John be a 'type of the Christian Soldier' or 'a good man spoiled by the monastic discipline'; whether Panurge be the 'careful portrait of a man without a soul,' or merely a personification of the Renaissance. But the initiated heed nothing of all this. They see the Tourainian sun shine on the hot rock above Chinon, on the maze of narrow mount-

ing streets, on the high-pitched roofs, on the grey-blue *tourelles* pricking upwards from the fantastic labyrinth of walls. There is the sound of sonorous plainsong from the monastic choir, of gross exuberant gaiety from the vineyards by the river; one listens to the eternal mystic mirth of them that rest in the purple shadow by the white, climbing road. The gracious and ornate *châteaux* on the Loire and the Vienne rise fair and shining to confront the incredible secrets of dim, far lifted Gothic naves, that seem ready to take the great deep and float away from the mist and dust of earthly towns to anchor in the haven of the clear city that hath foundations; the rank tale of the *garderobe*, of the farm kitchen, mingles with the reasoned, endless legend of the Schools, with luminous Platonic argument, with the spring of a fresh life. There is a smell of wine and of incense, of flowers and of ancient books; and through it all there is the exultation of chiming bells ringing for a new feast in a new land. For my part, I care very little whether Rabelais has overdrawn the depravity of the monastic orders, or whether Brother John was indeed spoiled by cloistral discipline.

We may go far afield and search the most distant ages and authors grotesquely unlike to one another, and yet we shall come to the same conclusion, that the casket alone was designed, that the jewel slipped in unawares. From the England of the Middle Ages to the New England of the Uni-

tarians there is a far way. But Chaucer desired to tell amusing and gallant tales, not thinking at all of the great and gorgeous tapestry that his rich words were weaving, of the full descant to which one sets every line he wrote. And Hawthorne, though a more conscious artist, scarcely understood that his puritan village tragedy but glimmers in the light of Sabbath fires, in the red air of supernatural suggestion which he wrought around it; the figure is hardly discernible in the midst of its radiant and terrible aureole. I have pointed out how Dickens began a common task, and at the end of it congratulated himself and his readers on the gradual reformation of the abuses which he had attacked; but I cannot discover in any part that Dickens realised how in 'Pickwick' he had written perhaps the last romance of the *picaro* that the world will ever see, that he had closed a great canon of literature. In 'Pickwick,' though the author understood nothing of it, we follow our hero into the unknown, with the wonder and charm and the laughter, though not with the awe, with which we followed 'Don Quixote' as he rode towards the enchanted land of his desire, we relish probably for the last time the joy of the winding of the lane, the thought of what lies beyond the wood and the hill, the surmise of the company that will gather in the ancient galleried inn. And Dickens, reviewing his book, parleys with us of the license of Counsel, of Poor Laws—prophesies the School Board even!

Literature is full of secrets, but perhaps it offers



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no stranger matter for our consideration than melodies unheard by those that made them, than Siren songs that never came to the Sirens' ears. The magicians have murmured strong spells and most powerful evocations, but like the Coptic priests, they have hardly or not at all understood the words of might.



## XVI

### REMINISCENCES OF 'LEWIS CARROLL'

BY LIONEL A. TOLLEMACHE

THE obituary notices of the man of genius who is best known as the literary father of the *Alices* have agreed in calling attention to one great peculiarity which marked him. His mind had a twofold activity. He might be described—of course *mutatis mutandis et minutis minuendis*—as made up of Æsop and Euclid fused together, somewhat as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde were fused together. To speak more precisely: as a mathematician, he did his work well; as a romancist, admirably. The intellectual athlete who kept his balance on the rugged and bewildering heights of Conic Sections and Determinants could freely disport himself in what I would call a *waking-dreamland*, a land whose phantasmagoria

Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax  
And cabbages and kings

was interspersed with such veritable *lusus super-*

*naturalitatis* as pedestrian Oysters and plaintive Mockturtles. So that haply he might (in a novel sense) have taken for his motto : *Valet ima summis Mutare*. But the point to note is that his intellect, vigorous and versatile on these oddly remote and dissimilar levels, was unwieldy on intermediate levels. He could soar and dive far better than he could walk. This may partly account for his unreadiness in conversation. Not, indeed, that he was unable at times to talk brilliantly. With his ready command of homely and witty illustrations, he could hardly fail to achieve this. Indeed, I have obtained distinct testimony on the point from one of his intimate friends, who writes :

‘Of his brilliancy there can be no manner of doubt ; but it was at the same time very difficult to define or focus. You ask me for some of his brilliant flashes. I am quite unable to give you any. All he said, all his oddities and clever things, arose out of the conversation—conversation quite of an ordinary everyday sort ; to explain it at all you would want shorthand notes of everything that was said, and even then you would not follow it, unless you knew the people who were talking, the peculiarities of this man, and the deafness of that, and so on. It was just Alice, all kinds of queer terms given to things. You never knew where he would take you next ; and all the while there seemed to be an odd logical sequence, almost impelling your assent to most unexpected conclusions. He had a great fund of stories ; these again were never told independently, they were fished up from his stores by some line dropped down in ordinary talk.

He always said he never invented them (and my own impression is that he did not), but that they had been read somewhere or told him by someone. He never told stories against people, was never bitter or cruel, never attempted to "score" off others! '\*

But, though sometimes a brilliant, Dodgson was not a steady, or what may be termed a *safe* talker. He could not be relied on to bear his part in the give-and-take of serious conversation; and (so to say) to keep the shuttlecock flying at neither more nor less than the convenient height. Indeed, the greatest praise which his most partial friends could claim for him as a talker would be that which Wellington bestowed on Talleyrand, namely, that he was generally dull, but now and then said things which his hearers would never forget. Thus, then, we may conclude that he had no eye for the

\* It may be instructive to contrast the view of Dodgson's conversational powers which finds expression in this interesting letter with the view taken by another of his friends, a man of science. The latter tells me that, to his thinking, Dodgson was not a brilliant talker; he was too peculiar and paradoxical; and the topics on which he loved to dwell were such as would bore many persons; while, on the other hand, when he himself was not interested, he occasionally stopped the flow of a serious discussion by the intrusion of a disconcerting epigram. At first I was taken aback by this glaring discrepancy of opinion. But on second thoughts I am tempted, though with the utmost diffidence, to suggest a partial explanation. Let me state, then, that the correspondent from whom I have quoted is orthodox, whereas my scientific friend inclines towards modern views. Now, I suspect that Dodgson's pleasantry, however seemingly extravagant, had a method in it, and that, even if none of his paradoxes had (like those of Mansel) a more or less clearly-defined theological purpose, at anyrate his wit would play with the greatest ease and effect among orthodox and sympathetic listeners. Nor is it likely that among such listeners his sallies would be rated at less than their full value. As a general rule, orthodoxy combined with brilliancy is like glycerine combined with vaccine—it enables a little of it to go a very long way!



middle-distance of the intellectual landscape. The lower generalisations of philosophy and the higher generalisations of daily experience, which together form the common ground where men of parts and men without parts can freely meet and converse—these *axiomata media* of discourse were almost a sealed, were (let us say) an *uncut*, book to our mathematical romancist.

He was, indeed, addicted to mathematical and sometimes to ethical paradoxes. The following specimen was propounded by him in my presence. Suppose that I toss up a coin on the condition that, if I throw heads once, I am to receive a 1d; if twice in succession, an additional dole of 2d; if thrice, a further addition of 4d; and so on, doubling for each successful toss: what is the value of my prospects? The amazing reply is that it amounts to infinity; for, as the profit attached to each successful toss increases in exact proportion as the chance of success diminishes, the value (so to say) of each toss will be identical, being in fact a  $\frac{1}{2}$ d; so that the value of an infinite number of tosses is an infinite number of half-pence. Yet, in fact, would any one give me sixpence for my prospect? This, concluded Dodgson, shows how far our conduct is from being determined by logic. The only comment that I will offer on his astounding paradox is that, in order to bring out his result, we must suppose a somewhat monotonous eternity to be consumed in the tossing process.

He told me of a simple, too simple, rule by

which, he thought, one could be almost sure of making something at a horse-race. He had on various occasions noted down the fractions which represented the supposed chances of the competing horses, and had observed that the sum of those chances amounted to more than unity. Hence he inferred that, even in the case of such hard-headed men as the backers, the wish is often father to the thought; so that they are apt to overrate the chances of their favourites. His plan, therefore, was—Bet against all the horses, keeping your own stake the same in each case. He did not pretend to know much about horse-racing, and I probably know even less; but I understand that it would be impossible to adjust the 'hedging' with sufficient exactitude—in fact, to get bets of the right amount taken by the backers.

Two other 'dodges' of his may be mentioned here. He said that, if a dull writer sent you a copy of his books, you should at once write and thank him, and should add, with delphic ambiguity, that you will *lose* no time in perusing them! Being a strict moralist, he must assuredly have meant so palpable an equivocation to be regarded as a mere *jeu d'esprit*. He was doubtless more serious in asserting that, whenever a mother held up an uncomely infant for his inspection, he met her wistful gaze with the exclamation, 'He *is* a baby!' Might not Falconbridge have condoned such an evasion *in extremis* as being, at worst, 'a virtuous sin'? To be frank would be a mortal offence; and

to avert such a mishap, one might be tempted to invoke a principle which assuredly could not be extended to all cases—‘*Salus amicitiae, suprema lex.*’ Better this than to set up the more widely applicable and therefore more abusable plea—‘*De minimis non curat moralitas.*’

Dodgson had an ingenious *memoria technica* to impress and illustrate Harmonic Progression. According to him, it is (or was) the rule at Christ Church that, if an undergraduate is absent for a night during term-time without leave, he is for the first offence sent down for a term; if he commits the offence a second time, he is sent down for two terms; if a third time, Christ Church knows him no more. This last calamity Dodgson designated as ‘infinite.’ Here, then, the three degrees of punishment may be reckoned as 1, 2, *infinity*. These three figures represent three terms in an ascending series of Harmonic Progression, being the counterparts of 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 0, which are three terms in a descending Arithmetical Progression.

After the foregoing manifestations of the riddling spirit which possessed this (ποικιλωδός) Oxonian Sphinx, we are not surprised to learn that, though he generally delighted children, he has been known to bore them with arithmetical puzzles. Also, his favourites sometimes complained that his interest in them passed away with their childhood. He related to me a quaint incident, which is said to be highly characteristic of him. He mentioned that he took no great interest in little boys, and that

once, on receiving a letter from a child with a hermaphrodite name, either Sydney or Evelyn, he supposed the writer to be a boy, and answered somewhat curtly. Learning afterwards that his small correspondent was a girl, he made his peace by writing to her with great cordiality and with a mock-serious playfulness. His letter contained an injunction to the following effect:—'If you see Nobody coming into the room, please give him a kiss from me.' Was he prompted thus to personify Nobody by the recollection of a famous scene in the 'Odyssey'? At all events, being sorely perplexed as to the manner of bestowing a ghostly embrace on visible and incarnate nothingness, the poor child naïvely acknowledged her embarrassment in a letter which she wrote to her enigmatical monitor, and which he kindly read aloud to me.

He spoke of the difficulties which he had to encounter before his 'Alice' could make her appearance on the stage. Especially he dwelt on the corrections which were needed in 'The Walrus and the Carpenter.' His intention had been that this farcical interlude should be represented in its original form. But he discovered that the tranquil massacre of the oysters was a catastrophe too tame for dramatic effect. Thereupon he conceived the happy thought of making the ghosts of the victims jump on the sleeping forms of their assassins, and give them bad dreams. With pardonable—or rather with amiable—vanity he informed me that the spirit shown by the defunct oysters in inflicting

this (somewhat mild) retaliation drew loud applause from the spectators.

Owing to the immense popularity of this fable without a moral, or with a queer moral (for, in very truth, the loquacious and companionable oysters are more like children bewitched into the shape of oysters), I am tempted to make, or rather repeat, a minute criticism upon it. Referring to the form in which it was originally written, I asked its author about its concluding stanza, and especially about the line—‘Shall we be trotting home again?’ The humorous fatuity of this line, addressed as it is to the eaten oysters, would assuredly tally far better with the unctuous and gratuitous wheedling of the Walrus than with the commonplace bluntness of the Carpenter; why, then, is it put into the Carpenter’s mouth? Dodgson frankly owned that the objection had never occurred to him. He said something about the number of syllables in the first line of the stanza, but he presently remarked that this line might be written, ‘O Oysters dear, the Walrus said.’ On the whole, he left on my mind the impression that, if he had woven anew the quaintly and brilliantly variegated threads of the threefold wondertale of Alice (*Tergeminam Aliciam, tria virginis ora creavit*), this trifling blemish in its best-remembered and oftenest-quoted episode would possibly have been removed. *Si nulla est, tamen excute nullam.*

My sketch of ‘Lewis Carroll’ would be incomplete if I made no mention of his solicitude to avoid



every form of pleasantry which could possibly give offence. Everybody remembers the triumphant conclusion of 'Alice in the Looking-Glass.' After not a few singular adventures, the heroine crosses a fateful stream; whereupon a crown is set on her head; and, entering a stately mansion, she is welcomed with the rejoicings of her friends, rejoicings which are in no wise lessened by the infliction of a sudden and severe, if not capricious, punishment on a member of the opposite party. All this, ever since my first perusal of the book, has reminded me of the closing scene of that favourite of my boyhood, 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' I mentioned this association of ideas to Dodgson; and I let him divine my curiosity to know whether the coincidence was undesigned. He took the matter more seriously than I had expected. With evident annoyance, he assured me that the thought of imitating Bunyan had never occurred to him; such trespassing on sacred ground would have seemed to him highly irreverent; and, sooner than be guilty of that irreverence, he would have re-written this portion of the book. At the same time, he acknowledged that he had nearly been betrayed into an oversight which he would have regretted exceedingly. Mill was once provoked into saying that a certain wise man was remarkable, not only for seeing what ordinary men could not see, but also for not seeing what they could see. It was with a somewhat similar sense of anomaly and incongruity that I learnt that, without the least suspicion of

profanity, such an accomplished man as Dodgson had, in the first draft of 'Alice in Wonderland,' made the passion-flower do duty for a flower in a passion. Fortunately he showed the manuscript to a lady friend, who informed or reminded him of the sacred source from which that flower derives its name. The correction was at once made ; and the passion-flower yielded its place to the tiger-lily.

## XVII

### A SECOND COLLOQUY ON CRITICISM

BY AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

**I**N an earlier number of this Review I remarked on the fact that acquaintance with authors dulls the edge of criticism. Since then I have noticed an apparent unwillingness on the part of critics to admit this ; but surely to deny it is to fly in the face of human nature. You cannot impale a friend upon your hook as if you loved him ; wriggle the silly fellow will until the mildest-mannered critic finds himself using the language of the fishwife, famous in story, who was overheard cursing the eels she was skinning alive for not lying still. Lordly editors may declare themselves able to select from their huge roll-call of critics 'kinless loons' who, like the Prince Regent, 'have no predilections,' but one critic is not always so good as another.

So important a thing is a free hand that young men, with all their rashness and crudity, are not infrequently the best critics of contemporary books,

for, knowing hardly 'anybody,' and with their way in the world still to make, they are alike ruthless and unembarrassed, and consequently delightfully well able, with their whoops and cries, to flutter the dove-cotes where, drooping a little over their perches, sit sunning themselves the crop-full authors. But the sad years that bring the philosophic mind bring other things as well, and amongst them a hatred of strife and contention, of scowling faces and averted glances.

'Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace.' Why should I strike even the Hospitaller's shield? What need to revile my neighbour simply because he has written a novel that makes me creep all down my back. He will not leave off writing because of my back, but I (how easily) can leave off reading my neighbour, and thus in time may learn to love him. Yes, but what is to become of my critical faculties? Are they to find no expression?

To ignore the living altogether, and with the poet Southey (but was Southey a poet?) to spend your critical hours among the dead, is a way out of the difficulty, and a very pleasant way too, and one full of peace and safety. Pope cannot lampoon you, or Milton call you a dog with two g's. I have never cared to deny that I like authors best when they are dead.

Philosopher and Poet you shall find  
Each ever after his own kind.

'Tis well to watch them ; not too near, perhaps,  
One snarls at you, the other snaps.

Besides, to the critic Death is of great assistance. There is no more wonderful adjuster of reputations than he. No sooner has 'the surly, sullen bell' given witness to the world that a distinguished author has departed from it, than you begin to perceive with a nervous apprehensiveness how much you had either over or under-estimated him. In the former case, greatly though you had prized him, much as you may owe to him, none the less is he to be seen creeping slowly down the sky; whilst in the latter case the under-estimated author proudly climbs it.

Living authors, though they despise the critics, still clamour to be criticised, and no more approve of an exclusive devotion being paid to the dead than does an artist of to-day share your dilettante conviction that the only pictures worth buying are by the Old Masters; but from the critic's point of view it is hard to forget that the only English critics who have any reputation chiefly concerned themselves with authors who were no longer living when they (these critics) wrote. Dryden, Addison, Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, Bagehot, Arnold were great critics who did not worry overmuch about their contemporaries. Indeed, one wonders whether it would be possible to fill even a thin volume with criticisms of authors written by their coevals which would be worth reading. I doubt it.

Nor is it hard to find the reason. Authors who claim to be imaginative are divided into the good, the bad, and the humdrum. Contemporary



criticism finds it easy to dispose of the bad author and the humdrum, the only risk it runs (no light one certainly) being the occasional mistake of one of the bad authors for a good one. Criticism of this kind quickly loses its interest. Who wants to be for ever following a murdered poetaster to his long home? Who would wish to live enshrined in a sneer? The only one of Macaulay's Essays any sane man would consent to lose is his Montgomery, and though Dr Johnson's review of Soame Jenyns' 'Origin of Evil' is worth a king's ransom, it is not a *sine qua non* of existence like his preface to Shakespeare.

But what about the good authors? Surely the critic might have something to say to them. So indeed he might, and so after a time he will, but at the start it is nervous work. It was well said by Carlyle, who said many things well—'Directly in the face of most intellectual tea-circles it may be asserted that no good book or good thing of any sort shows its best face at first; nay, that the commonest quality in a true work of art, if its excellence have any depth and compass, is that at first sight it occasions a certain disappointment—perhaps even mingled with its undeniable beauty *a certain feeling of aversion.*'

This goes to the very root of the matter, and accounts for the extraordinary reception given to works of genius by critics, undeniably well equipped for general purposes. These critics did but express 'a certain feeling of aversion,' occasioned by the

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first sight of an original. It is, I repeat, nervous work handling the genius which has not yet created its own atmosphere.

Perhaps the safest method of criticism is the comparative. It is also the most interesting. And yet people professed to grow weary of Matthew Arnold's pocket-scale of poetical weights and measures with which he was so fond of testing the value of men's wares. The meritorious Howard did the like with prison rations. 'Is that a ration?' he would exclaim, and then, whipping out a scale, would demonstrate to the affrighted gaoler it was half a pound short of weight. But for all that Mr Arnold's was an excellent way. Is it blank verse we are invited to consider? Surely it is no sin to murmur

Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,  
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged  
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,  
On evil days though fall'n and evil tongues,  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude ; yet not alone, while thou  
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn  
Purples the East. Still govern thou my song  
Urania, and fit audience find, though few.

Is it an ode? Well, well !

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?  
To what green altar and mysterious priest  
Lead'st thou that heifer, lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?  
What little town by river or sea-shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?

It is only by some such means as those employed by Mr Arnold that the great tradition is kept alive, and with the passages he was so fond of quoting for ever sounding in our ears, it ought not to be difficult to conquer one's first feelings of aversion to the next great poet who comes among us, even though he should not appear clothed in his might, but (as is generally the case) with all his faults lying thick upon the surface of his verse. It ought not perhaps—but it will be. Who need wish to be a critic in the twentieth century? When, what with American copyright, royalties on the drama, and heavy death-duties, I may live to see Chatsworth inhabited by a really bad author, whilst all my satisfaction in the reflection that I at all events never opened my mouth without abusing him may be destroyed by the mournful knowledge that I allowed the really good author of my day to pass without a tribute by.

## XVIII

### OLD LAMPS FOR NEW

BY GEORGE W. SMALLEY

‘WHEN a new book comes out,’ said Sam Rogers, ‘I read an old one.’ Among all the maxims about reading, this—for a maxim it is—seems to me the one most apt for the present day. It is also the one to which least attention is paid. There is a fashion in reading, as in hats and coats, and, in most circles which desire to be thought literary, the fashion is novelty. Whoso would be esteemed a person of culture must know, not, as Arnold said, the best which has been thought and done in the world, but the latest. You may perhaps escape without reproach if you know nothing of Homer or Dante, but if you cannot show yourself familiar with the last blend of fiction and pseudo-Christianity or pseudo-socialism, or have not some smattering of such literature as the circulating library provides, and especially of the books best advertised, you must endure the censure of those who have. ‘There is nothing so contemptible,’ said Mazzini, ‘as a literary coterie.’

Tennyson, who was not without literature, quotes the saying and approves it. And there is perhaps no extant literary coterie in which the modern note is not heard continually.

Emerson advised us to read no book which is not a year old. He thought that a book which had lived a year might have a presumption in its favour ; not foreseeing by what publishing arts a book may be kept alive after the breath is out of it. Nor did he value periodical literature overmuch. 'If,' he said, 'we should give to Shakespeare, to Bacon, to Wordsworth, the time we give to the newspapers—but who dare speak of such a thing?' It is plain that he did not think newspapers the best food for the mind—even the newspapers of his day. To them, and to the inexorable necessity weighing upon them to publish what is new, he may well enough have traced the passion for mere newness which affects the modern reader of modern books. He had another view. I went to see him at Concord while I was reading in the Harvard Law School. After some questions about the study of law—for he liked to know the practical side of things—and after commending it, he added : ' But do not read law only. Keep your mind open. Read Plato.' Then and after, he urged the students who came to him for counsel, while mastering their own branch of learning, to master also some other, and to read in a direction as different as possible from that of their professional pursuits. He would have them, in Burke's phrase, diversify their minds.



He may well enough have borrowed his view of the law from Burke's well-known criticism, that it does not open and liberalise the mind exactly in the same proportion as it quickens and invigorates the understanding. However that may be, Emerson's remedy was not to read a book of the day, but a Greek author of whom he has said that perhaps not more than a dozen men in any one generation have a full perception of his philosophy and purpose.

There is little chance that any protest, or any number of protests, against the futility of what passes for literature in the market-place will diminish either the publishers' output or the ambition or industry of the writers of the day. The yearly statistics of printed books are, I believe, a little more appalling in England than in the United States, but in both countries the productivity increases yearly. The expression of a preference for books which have stood the test of time would be less intelligible perhaps in New York than in London, at any rate less acceptable; and less in Chicago than in New York. There is, among large classes of Americans, a fierce impatience of what is venerable or remote, whether in literature or other matters. They would declare with Macbeth that—

All our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.

--and therefore they are for to-day.

It has been said that there are in France but two parties—those who believe that the history of

France began in 1789, and those who believe that it ended then. There is a type of American who considers that on this side of the Atlantic, and for the people of this country, history began in 1776, on the fourth of July of that year—and not political history only. He it is whose voice has been heard for years past rather loudly insisting that the literature which best deserves the attention of Americans is American literature. When M. Paul Bourget, following Tocqueville and others, too bluntly replied, 'There is none,' this patriot rejoined hotly that Mr Paul Bourget and Tocqueville and the rest knew nothing about it—they were foreigners and Frenchmen, and how could they? The truth, of course, lies midway. It is unhappily true, that even the great West has not yet given birth to a Shakespeare, though Minnesota is responsible for Mr Ignatius Donnelly, who sought to prove that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon—not perhaps a long step toward the creative energy of the Elizabethan period. Mr Howells has announced that in the writing of novels the method of Thackeray is obsolete, and yet Thackeray is not wholly superseded. There was to be a new fiction; the advent of the American novel was long since predicted, and is still awaited. It is like what Gambetta said when challenged to take sides on the social question, 'There is no social question; there are social questions.' So there is no 'American novel,' but there are American novels in multitude, and many of them admirable.

A more rational, though less patriotic, theory of criticism has of late prevailed. It is seen that even in America the laws which since the dawn of letters have governed the production of literature must govern it still. It was an American artist of originality who surprised the Royal Academy by enunciating the canon that there was no such thing as English art or French art—there was simply Art, and it was universal and of all time. Mr Whistler's opinion cannot be put aside. There is, of course, a sense in which there is an English or French school of Art, and an English or French or American Literature, as there was a Greek and Roman Literature.

We have in the United States a body of literature of which we are justly proud. But its greatest names belong, as in England, to the past, and every one of them is an argument for the reading of old books and not of new books. The intellectual activities of to-day, whether in England or in America, seem to many of us of a high order, but they are not pre-eminently literary. Who doubts that in England the golden period of the Victorian age is past? Who expects in America a new Emerson, a new Hawthorne, a new Lowell, ere the century dies out? I do not mean to disparage, if I could, by a single word, the well-earned fame of those living writers who are, as Johnson said, among the chief glories of every people. Some of them are well known in England, some less well known. Mr Henry James, Mr Howells, Mr Bret

Harte, 'John Oliver Hobbes'—these are novelists whose names are household words in two countries. But Octave Thanet and Owen Wister, who have taken up the story of Western life as it is lived to-day, both of whom write with picturesque fidelity, have yet a transatlantic reputation to achieve. Stedman, the poet-critic ; Aldrich, the poet-novelist ; Hay, the poet-historian and ambassador, are writers who, though living, have kept their honourable place for a generation. In history, in political economy, in law, in science, in many other great departments of intellectual life, there have been and are great American names, and in pure literature there are others.

Mr Goldwin Smith, writing the other day in these columns, remarked that American historiography had of late years advanced greatly in purity of style. There he suggests the service which literature may do, and I hope is doing. There really is no reason in the nature of things why history, whether in books or newspapers, should be written in slovenly English. Froude, with his incomparable beauty of style, is a witness to the contrary. But is a good style to be acquired otherwise than by much study of the great writers who have gone before us ? Let Stevenson answer—he has told us how he acquired his. How many living writers can be named to whom the student of style could usefully go to school ? An exception may be made in favour of the French : even if we include some of the living. A good French writer is

probably the best guide to the young English or American writer, because the Frenchman abounds in precisely those qualities of style in which the Englishman or American is most deficient. And when you go to a foreign land, it is like going to another generation ; you pass out of the present atmosphere and you escape the influences which make the atmosphere of to-day injurious.

So, whether we love literature for what we may get from it, or love it, as I hope we do, for its own sake, we come back to the same point and to the writers whose fame is established. And if we want another counsellor we may take Lord Kenyon, who, in the weightier matters of the law, wished always *stare supra antiquas vias*—bad Latin, but sound sense.





## XIX

### BACON ENTHRONED

BY D. H. MADDEN

THE writer of the following paper can lay no claim to originality. His method of literary investigation and his mode of reasoning are simply those in vogue among Baconians; nor do his revelations differ widely from those upon which their faith is founded. If his communication has any value, it is because he has carried his inquiries somewhat further than his predecessors, who have failed to detect traces of Bacon's handiwork in *Venus and Adonis*, and, for the most part, leave Ben Jonson severely alone. The identity of the writer and the reasons which induced him to confide his discoveries to my care can interest no one. And so, without further preface, I leave my correspondent to speak for himself:—

‘SIR,—The faith of the simple folk who still believe that the “Shakespeare” plays were the

workmanship of a sporting attorney's clerk from Stratford-on-Avon must have been rudely shaken by the discovery announced in a recent magazine article entitled "Shakespeare Dethroned."

"Hi ludi, tuiti sibi, Fr. Bacono nati." This is the statement which the ingenuity of Mr Bucke has evolved from the hitherto unintelligible word in *Love's Labour's Lost*—"honorificabilitudinitatibus." It is little to the purpose to point out that the sentence is not Latin. It is the best that even the genius of Bacon could do with the word selected as the repository of his great secret, and what satisfied Bacon may well be accepted by Baconians.

'I must not be understood as minimising the importance of this most convincing anagram when I say that even it must yield to a direct and categorical statement of fact. Such a statement it has been my good fortune to discover.

'There is a scene in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* so devoid of apparent meaning that it has been omitted from acting versions of the play. It is that in which William, son of Master Page, is put through his Latin accidence by Sir Hugh Evans. He is made to decline the pronoun "hic," which finally resolves itself into "hanc, hoc," pronounced by the Welshman "hang hog."

'Now, Sir, this passage, read in the light of modern discoveries, is absolutely clear.

'For here we have a "page" associated with the name "William," and denoted by the pronoun

"hic," gradually resolved into the words "hang hog," whereupon ensues the following dialogue:—

'*Mrs Quickly*.—"Hang-hog" is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

'*Evans*.—Leave your prabbles [parables] 'oman.

'In other words, "hic" (*i.e.*, William) is shown, by the medium of the Latin language, to be no other than Bacon.

'Bacon and the learned Ben Jonson seem to have agreed in selecting the Latin tongue as the means of conveying to posterity their cryptic information. The writer of the article to which I have referred boldly appeals to the testimony of Jonson. He does well; for if Jonson, who knew both Bacon and Shakespeare intimately, and who could be under no mistake as to the authorship of the plays, had really attributed them to Shakespeare, I should have felt some difficulty in getting over his evidence. Here, again, I think that I may fairly claim credit for a remarkable discovery.

'The passage upon which Shakespearians mainly rely is that in which Jonson explains his wish that Shakespeare had blotted a thousand lines; adding, "I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any."

'This remarkable statement is found under the significant heading, "Discoveries." It is introduced by the words, "De Shakespeare nostrat." The last word has been generally taken to be an abbreviated form of "nostrate." But who ever

abbreviated a word merely to avoid the use of a single letter? It is evident that "Shakespeare nostrat" is a fragment of a longer sentence. In the light of the "discoveries" at which Jonson hints, we can supply the missing words, and read, "Shakespeare, no Strat[ford man]." If the preceding word "De" be also (as seems probable) an abbreviation, it may well stand for "dethroned," and the whole "discovery" (with slight transposition) will read: "Shakespeare de[throned] no Strat[ford man]." Thus Jonson as well as Bacon made elaborate preparations for the inevitable discovery, and he has left it on record that if he lent himself to Bacon's scheme, he, at all events, was not deceived.

'The Anagram and the Cryptogram we know of old. More valuable, because more characteristic of the author, is what I may call the Crypto-pun, or hidden play upon words, suggesting to the initiated the name of Bacon. "What is a.b. spelt backward, with the horn on his head?" asks Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In these apparently unmeaning words Mr Bucke finds a cryptic allusion. The answer to that, of course, is "Ba, with a horn added." Now *Ba* with a horn added is *Bacornu*, "which is not, but suggests, and was probably meant to suggest, Bacon."

'I venture to suggest that even a better example of the Crypto-pun may be found in the word by which the author of the "Shakespearian" dramas has associated his real name with the greatest



creation of his genius. We like to think of David Copperfield as Dickens, and of Maggie Tulliver as George Eliot. Every true Baconian would gladly connect the name of his master with that of Hamlet. It would have been impossible for the author, consistently with his scheme of concealment, to have called the Prince of Denmark Bacon. But, foreseeing the inevitable time of discovery, he named him Ham:—let, or hindered from discovering himself to the world.

‘I have no doubt that a careful search would reveal many more examples of this most interesting device. Take for instance Sonnet cxi., in which the poet admittedly speaks in his proper person. It is impossible to extract from this sonnet any Crypto-pun on the name of “Shakespeare.” But what of “Bacon?” When the writer after a reference to “eisel” (vinegar) as a remedy for some “strong infection” (possible trichinosis), adds, “pity is enough to *cure me*,” is it not evident that this phrase (in Mr Bucke’s words) “suggests, and was probably meant to suggest, Bacon?” Is it not at least as evident as the suggestion of Bacon by the words “a.b. spelt backward, with the horn on his head?” On this point I appeal with confidence to even the most bigoted of Shakespearians.

‘The profusion with which allusions to field sports and to horsemanship are scattered throughout the works attributed to Shakespeare, taken in connection with the fact that Bacon shows no

interest in sport, has been eagerly laid hold on by Shakespearians. These allusions have been described as "purposeless," often out of place with their surroundings, and alien to the plot or character in hand.

"Purposeless" they certainly are, on the assumption that Shakespeare wrote the pieces into which they are intruded. But surely this circumstance ought to suggest a doubt to a thinking mind. Why attribute "purposeless" action to one capable of writing *Othello* and *As You Like It*? But if Bacon be the author, the purpose becomes at once apparent, and the part played by Shakespeare in the production of the Baconian plays is clearly discernible. Their purpose was to aid in the scheme of concealment. That Shakespeare was the transcriber, not the author, of the Baconian dramas is suggested by the recorded fact that the MSS., as delivered to the players, contained no blots or erasures. He was, I venture to suggest, something more than a transcriber. To him was intrusted the task of interlarding the plays with sporting allusions and phrases, introduced in such a manner as to avert all suspicion from their true author. It must be admitted that he performed his allotted task faithfully. Indeed, he may be said to have overdone it. For instance, the words "heart" and "dear," in season and out of season, suggest the inevitable pun. So coarsely was this done that the suspicions of critics were aroused, and they were more than once on the

verge of a discovery. Coleridge absolutely rejects the line containing Mark Antony's pun on the death of Cæsar as an "alien conceit" intruded into the original text. Professor Dowden, referring to the description of the horse in *Venus and Adonis*, asks whether it is poetry or an extract from the catalogue of an auctioneer.

'I observe that Mr Bucke does not hesitate to attribute this poem, together with the Sonnets and *Lucrece*, to the author of the plays. In so doing he has deprived Shakespearians of their strongest argument. Who but the author of *Venus and Adonis* (I have heard it asked) could have written *Love's Labour's Lost*, and who but the author of the Sonnets could have conceived the Tragedies?

'I cannot pursue in detail the train of thought thus suggested. I can only indicate a few results of the discovery. (1) The identification of Mr W. H. (the "only begetter" of the Sonnets and the despair of Shakespearians) with William Herbert, an elder brother of the poet, George Herbert, to whom Bacon dedicated his only acknowledged volume of verse, and whose brother would naturally be chosen as the intermediary between the author and the publisher of the Sonnets. (2) A clear understanding of the poet's meaning when he tells us that "public manners" (the exigencies of public life) caused his name to receive a brand ("Bacon" branded as "Shakespeare"), adding that the poet made

himself "a motley [play-actor] to the view." (3) The solution of the enigma of the black woman of Sonnets cxxvii.-cxlii. (the "worser spirit" striving for mastery over the poet's soul) by the Black Art of the Middle Ages—the "rough magic" finally abjured by Bacon in the person of Prospero, which he contrasts with his "better angel"—*i.e.*, the Baconian Philosophy, the keynote of which is to be found in the first line of the first Sonnet, "From fairest creatures we desire increase," and of which Macaulay writes: "What, then, was the end which Bacon proposed to himself? It was, to use his own emphatic expression, fruit."

'I am, Sir,

'Your obedient servant,

'HANG HOG.'

I see no reason in the nature of things why the speculations of my correspondent should not be adopted by Baconians. Their creed is essentially progressive. The hints and conjectures of half a century ago have become the beliefs of to-day. To my mind his Crypto-puns are quite as convincing as the Cryptograms or Anagrams of his predecessors; and if his explanation of the 'Shakespearian' allusions to sport and to horsemanship be rejected, I really do not know what can be offered in its place.

## XX

### AN OLD PUZZLE

BY LESLIE STEPHEN

THERE is a charm in old stories of crime which must be admitted even by people who are too prudish to confess to pleasure in modern police reports. Perhaps in reading the 'State Trials' we flatter ourselves that we are studying history ; or it may be that there is something impressive—as Carlyle so often insists—in the sudden gleam which for a moment illuminates one little spot of light in the vanishing past. Anyhow the history of Miss Canning, which occupied all London for a year in the middle of the last century, has a perennial interest. Fielding, unluckily for himself, got mixed up in the story ; Voltaire wrote an account of it as having some remote bearing upon the famous Calas proceedings ; Lord Campbell and Mr John Paget agree that it was one of the most extraordinary cases on record ; and Mr Courtney Kenny, reader in law at Cambridge, has elaborately discussed it in a pamphlet



recently republished from the *Law Quarterly Review*. There are questions of more pressing importance, inasmuch as Miss Canning and her victims or persecutors have probably been dead for a century. Yet there is something still fascinating in the story, both as an incidental picture of English life at the period, and as an illustration of some points in the theory of evidence—perhaps, we should say, in the genesis of lies.

The main facts are simple. Elizabeth Canning was a servant girl in London. She was allowed to visit an uncle on the 1st January, 1753. She set out to return at 9 P.M., but never reached her home. Four weeks afterwards she suddenly appeared at her mother's house in a state of squalor and emaciation. The problem is, Where had she been in the interval? If her own account be true, she had been attacked by two men and dragged to a house ten miles off at Enfield Wash, occupied by 'Mother Wells,' a woman of the worst character. An old gipsy woman called Mrs Squires, with two girls, was in the kitchen. Mrs Squires' face was not one to be forgotten. 'God Almighty,' as she said herself, 'never made such another,' and her portrait is extant to confirm the statement. This hideous old lady asked if Canning would 'go their way?' She said 'No'; whereupon she was confined in a back room, where she stayed without further molestation for four weeks. She had nothing to eat except some bits of bread and a mince-pie, which happened to be in her pocket.

At the end of the time, she pulled some boards from a window, and escaped. Mrs Wells and Mrs Squires were tried upon charge of this outrage, and on 26th February both were convicted and sentenced to death. The Lord Mayor, however, who was on the bench, thought the case suspicious, obtained a reprieve, and made inquiries. Mrs Squires declared that during the time of the alleged imprisonment she had been making her rounds in Dorsetshire with her son and daughter. Confirmatory evidence was collected, and after certain delays Canning was tried for perjury and convicted in May, 1753.

The excitement at the trial was intense. Mobs collected round the Court and threatened the witnesses. It was the first criminal trial which was not finished at a single sitting. Till eclipsed by the Tichborne case, it was scarcely surpassed by any non-political case in the interest excited. Omitting a number of subsidiary questions, the issue seems to be pretty simple. Thirty-five witnesses swore that Mrs Squires was travelling in Dorsetshire and elsewhere during January, 1753. Twenty-five swore that they had seen her during that time at Enfield Wash. Which are we to believe, and how is the false evidence (for one set of witnesses must have given false evidence) to be accounted for? It does not appear that any of the witnesses except Canning herself lied intentionally. We must also ask how the original story, if false, was suggested; and this seems to be easily

explicable. Miss Canning did not mention any names when she came home. She spoke of being confined in some unknown house. Then, said one of her friends, it must have been 'Mother Wells' house. She accepted the name when suggested, and a warrant was thereupon taken out against Mrs Wells. A large party of excited friends went with Miss Canning to identify the place. Some of them got there before her, and finding that a room in it did not correspond to her description (she had not mentioned, for example, some hay, of which it was partly full), went back to her and asked whether they were on the right track. She immediately modified her account to meet the case, now, for the first time, mentioning the hay. When she had reached the house, the gipsy came in with the crowd, and Miss Canning, when asked to identify her assailant, immediately pitched upon this hideous old lady as her gaoler. This alone is enough to suggest how the story was constructed by degrees, as the materials were provided by officious assistants.

The two masses of evidence as to the *alibi* may now be contrasted. It is hardly possible to doubt that the Dorsetshire witnesses were speaking honestly. The stories which they told were independent ones, but fitted into each other very accurately. The gipsies were traced to a number of different villages in succession. Various little incidents occurred ; a dance at one place, crossing a flood at another, a meeting of the gipsy's daughter

with her sweetheart, and so forth. All the incidents, mentioned by independent witnesses at different places and times, dovetail with each other. To combine so various a set of incidents with a single thread would be scarcely possible if they were not substantially true. The only real question was as to the date. Here, again, the evidence was satisfactory. One of the witnesses, for example, was an exciseman, the date of whose presence at a village was clearly fixed by the official record of his employment. The gipsy's daughter, in another place, had got a woman to write a letter to her sweetheart, and, though the postmark was injured, the date seems to have been sufficiently proved. Although, therefore, the evidence had, no doubt, been carefully got up by one of the gipsy's supporters, it seems to be very difficult to account for it by any hypothesis of honest mistake.

The conflicting evidence, on the other hand, is throughout liable to an obvious objection. A number of people swore, and, no doubt, honestly, that they had seen old Mrs Squires at Enfield in January. In some cases they fixed the time by some incident which was of tolerably certain date. But in almost all, if not all, cases the gipsy had no specific connection with the incident. She was merely passing at the time, and it might well be that they had simply made some error as to the connection between the two events or as to the time at which the incident occurred. In one case

this was clearly made out. The gipsy had been really seen by a person bringing back some work to a shop. It was proved from the books that the work was really brought back some days later than the witness supposed, and, therefore, at a time when the gipsy had admittedly returned. Consequently it is easy to suppose that the facts alleged really happened, but in different connections. There was great excitement at Enfield, where subscriptions were being raised, and everybody taking a side in the question which had made the place famous. There was, as one witness puts it, a 'hurly-burly'; everybody was trying to remember anything that could throw light upon the story; many people did, in fact, remember having seen the gipsy pass, and even having had some words with her about her business—which was hawking smuggled goods; and the one thing necessary to make the evidence relevant was some blunder about dates. It happened that the change of style had just taken place; and there is a confusion between old and new Christmas Day, which perplexes several of the witnesses. Many of them could not read, and had vague notions about the calendar. Finally, the stories are not mutually confirmatory; they do not, like the Dorsetshire stories, dovetail with each other; and it is, therefore, perfectly easy to believe that, without conscious lying, the witnesses had become honestly confused about dates which had occurred some months beforehand.

On the whole, when we can see how the original



story might be, and in fact apparently was concocted ; and when we can accept an hypothesis which fully accounts for one mass of erroneous evidence without supposing perjury, while it seems impossible to explain the conflicting evidence without supposing its substantial truth, the conclusion seems to be as clear as can be expected. We fully believe that Miss Canning was guilty of perjury ; though she had not, it is said, any other stain upon her character. Where she was in January, 1753, can never be known ; but it is easy to suggest reasons why retirement might be convenient which it would be very undesirable either for her or her friends to reveal. Still she has given us so much amusement that we have a kind of pleasure in hearing that, when transported to America, she was kindly treated, made a respectable marriage, lived very happily ever afterwards, and has left descendants living at this day. Perhaps they still believe her story. Voltaire inferred from the case the inferiority of English criminal law to the French procedure, illustrated by the persecution of Calas. Certainly any one reading the case will admit that in the abused 18th century trials might be fairly conducted, and that some people escaped the gallows on rather easy terms.



## XXI

### ‘PICKWICK’

BY PERCY FITZGERALD

IT would be vain to praise or to disparage the immortal ‘Pickwick.’ Everything about it is remarkable. No modern work of the century has engendered so many other books, commentaries, illustrations, etc., or been so Protean in its developments. Drama, opera, music, translations pictures, topography, philology, almanacs, songsters, advertisements, pens, cigars, all exhibit this generative influence. There is a little library of writers on ‘Pickwick.’ Grave Professors, men of law, politicians, schoolmasters, have been drawn to it. Mr Lang, Professor Ward, Rimmer, Frost, Hughes, Kitton, Ashby Sterry—American as well as English—all have expatiated on the subject. Neither Scott, nor Thackeray, nor Byron, nor Macaulay, nor Tennyson can show anything like it. The commentary on the Waverleys is quite meagre by comparison. The oddity, too, is that no other work of ‘Boz’s’ has had this fruitfulness.

The reason would seem to be the tone of perfect conviction and reality in which it is conceived and carried out. The characters are treated almost biographically, and move forward according to its dates. A single passage, selected at random, will show this feeling :

The remainder of the period which Mr Pickwick had assigned as the duration of his stay at Bath passed over without the occurrence of anything material. Trinity Term commenced. *On the expiration of its first week*, Mr Pickwick and his friends returned to London, and the former gentleman, attended of course by Sam, straightway repaired to his old quarters at the George and Vulture.

It is impossible to resist this particularity; it is as though we were reading the movements of a living person in some newspaper. Further, the changes recorded in Mr Pickwick's character, who, from a foolish creature, became sensible, will not, as Dickens himself explains, 'appear forced or unnatural, for in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man generally impress us at first; it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we begin to look below these superficial traits.' One reason we have had no second 'Pickwick' from the same 'eminent hand,' though the theatrical passages in 'Nickleby' are thoroughly Pickwickian, may be that Dickens, like so many comic actors, believed that his real forte lay in the highly-strained and highly-strung pathetic. His broad humour, as he fancied, was to come in, like the comic scenes in Otway's 'Venice Preserved,' just to relieve the gloom. We can see how he put

his whole soul into those gruesome, sentimental stories introduced into ‘ Pickwick.’ This gained more and yet more on him as he went along, until, after ‘ Chuzzlewit,’ it became the staple of his work. Indeed, he and his friend Forster always thought rather poorly of ‘ Pickwick,’ and he would accept compliments with a sort of good-natured tolerance.

The name Pickwick was supplied from Bath, near which city there is, or was, a hamlet so called. A foundling, discovered here by a mail-coach guard, was named after the place, and grew up to be a great coach proprietor, and ‘ Boz,’ going down to Bath in 1835, must have noted ‘ Moses Pickwick’ on the door of the carriage. The book was begun at Furnival’s Inn, and continued at another set of rooms—some of it was written at Chalk, a village in Kent—and it was concluded at No. 48 Doughty Street. Forster revised some of the proofs, but the MS., with the exception of a few leaves now in America, has disappeared.

As a record of the changes in manners, customs, habits, feelings, and dress during the past sixty years, nothing could be more valuable, no other book could be named furnishing the same details.

We have now ‘ An Index to Pickwick,’ lately issued by Mr Neale, a barrister of the Temple, which is, perhaps, the most striking tribute to the force and fulness of the book. It is almost scientifically done, and, from the variety of its entries, furnishes quite a Pickwickian panorama.



Here we have quaint pre-Victorian phrases, traits of manners and customs, long since exploded ; old rare jests, topographical allusions, and descriptions, costumes, etc. It is curious what a grotesque sort of mosaic is thus presented—something almost macaronic. Thus under 'Jingle' we have all the salient points of that odd creature's career gathered up, and the analysis of his proceedings strikes us as odd indeed. Any one who had never seen 'Pickwick' and glanced over this index would say—as did the ostler of Burke—'Here is a most extraordinary man.' I myself have just completed a 'Pickwick Dictionary and Cyclopædia,' which forms an amazing repertory of all the heterogeneous matters, controversies, and facts of all kinds engendered by the book. We can find no reference to the profuse drinking that goes on; cold punch is not even named, nor is Jingle's odd phrase 'through the button-hole,' which called for a regular *exegesis* from Mr Walter Wren. Neither is there any heading on the important subject of marriage, as to which there are many wise and profound remarks scattered through the book. Witness that admirable caution of old Weller's: 'To see you married, Sammy—to see you a deluded wictim, and thinking in your innocence that it is all werry capital.' Another advantage of the index is that it emphasizes the many humorous remarks that are scattered through the work. 'There's a providence in it all,' said Sam. 'O' course there is,' replied his father, with a nod

of grave approval. 'Wot 'ud become of the undertakers vithout it, Sammy?'—which is one of the most humorous sayings in the whole, and perfectly sincere—for Mr Weller may have been thinking 'wot 'ud become' of his own profession threatened by the railways. 'As 'ud turpentine and beeswax his memory'; 'I wish I was behind him with a bradall'—these are racily Pickwickian, and our memory for them needs not such stimulants.

But where could this young fellow—then no more than twenty-four years old—have found this sagacity, this deep knowledge of the world, of human nature, and of manners? Assuredly in the hard school in Chandos Street, among the waifs of London, and, later, when grinding at the reporting business. He is a Pickwickian Marcus Aurelius. He drew what he saw. Jingle's elopement, and the chaise and four, the hot pursuit—so vividly done—were recollections of his own reporting excursions to Bath, when he was flying through behind four horses bearing a speech to town. Dickens never could resist drawing from a living model, and was most successful when he did so. He did not even spare his father and mother, or intimate friends like Forster, Landor, and Leigh Hunt. 'Pickwick' is full of such portraits. Count Smorltork was from Prince Puckler-Muskau; the traveller, Dowler, had some touches of Forster; Mr Pickwick himself from an old gentleman named Foster, described and introduced by the publisher; Jingle and Job from *Robert Macaire*,

then being played in London ; the hero of 'The Stroller's Tale,' from the younger Grimaldi. Weller senior was from a well-known stage coachman on the Rochester road, whom Mrs Lynn Linton recalls ; 'the fat boy' was taken from one Budden in the same district ; Nupkins from Mr Laing, a London magistrate, also brought on in 'Oliver Twist.' The election at Eatanswill was the election at Ipswich in which Mr Morrison and Sir Fitzroy Kelly were the candidates. I have heard the late Mr Alfred Morrison tell how Dickens was brought into the committee-room at the Great White Horse, in reference to a report of the speeches. Fizkin, the other candidate, suggests Fitzroy. Bantam, the M.C., is said in Bath to have been drawn from Colonel Jervoise, who was M.C. at the time of Boz's visit. He was scarcely, however, the ridiculous person Bantam is shown to be, for he later became a knight, general, and governor of a colony. Still, Dickens sends Sam up to the M.C.'s house in Queen Square, Bath ; and, oddly enough, No. 14 Queen Square was the actual house in which this Colonel Jervoise lived. It is now in the occupation of Mr Austin King. Buzfuz was the father of the present Mr Bompas, Q.C., and Judge Stareleigh, Sergeant, afterwards Judge Gazelee. The "Chops and Tomato Sauce" letters were parodies of those in the Norton case, to which also a strange burst in the story of Prince Bladud, dealing with his treatment of wives, refers. One striking social change that has occurred since

'Pickwick' is that the world has, as it were, put back the clock in the matter of age. Mr Pickwick, Mr Tupman, and Mr Wardle are all spoken of as 'old gentlemen,' yet not one of the trio was more than fifty. 'Old Wardle's' mother was alive and only seventy-three; the spinster aunt was 'fifty if she was an hour.' Nowadays a well-preserved man of sixty is merely 'elderly.'

Mr Marcus Stone, once walking with Dickens near Gadshill, noticed a grocer's cart with the name 'Weller' on it, and was told that these tradesfolk had actually suggested the name. In fact, there can be seen outside Chatham Church the Weller tomb, with the names of the family inscribed thereon. One of the oddest incidents connected with the book, where all is so odd and grotesque, is that Dickens should, long after, have known intimately a Weller family, and admired a beautiful Miss Weller, who was destined to be the mother of two gifted women—Lady Butler and Mrs Meynell. Further, two tragic events are associated with this greatly humorous book, and had well-nigh shipwrecked it—the first, the death of Seymour, the artist engaged, by his own hand; the second, the death of the author's sister-in-law, an interesting girl, who expired before his eyes. This sad business actually suspended the publication.

Mr Croker indicated a line of inquiry as to Boswell's great book, that much of it was intended as a justification of his own weaknesses and follies. Pickwick, in like manner, is much concerned with

Boz's own experiences, feelings, etc. Here is one striking specimen—Blacking, shoe cleaning, etc., is gone into with curious particularity. We are even told that at the White Hart, Boro', they used Day & Martin's, not Warren's, blacking. In what other novel would we find such a thing noted? In another place he talks of Warren's poetical advertisements. But everyone knows the dismal passage in Forster's 'life,' where the unhappy little boy was put to paste labels on the bottles of blacking, and where the misery of such a life is looked back to with horror. It gave him a ghastly pleasure to recur to this.

I have, in another place, shown how much Boswell ran in 'Boz's' head. The crumpet story, of course. Mr Pickwick kissing the old lady was like Dr Johnson kissing the old Lady Eglinton. But a more curious instance is the use of the word 'funny' by Jack Bamber, which is exactly the same sense as that adopted by the gentleman who turned round to Bozzy at the play.

It is extraordinary how the Pickwickian legend has developed in the case of inns where the illustrious traveller was supposed to have put up. Everywhere, at the Bull, Great White Horse, Angel, Leather Bottle, etc., is invariably shown a Mr Pickwick's room, which enthusiasts asked to be allowed to sleep in. Even at the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury—of which all there is recorded is 'they stopped to dine,' having ale and more Madeira, besides 'replenishing the case bottle'—Pickwickian



memories are tenderly cherished. Mr Ashby Sterry, when shown the sacred chamber at the Great White Horse, rather nonplussed the chambermaid by asking where Mr Peter Magnus had slept. But she adroitly said it was at the other side of the house, 'in the department of another lady.' There is a strong link, by the way, between Dickens and Scott, who died only four years before 'Pickwick' appeared. Mr George Hogarth—Dickens' father-in-law—was Scott's man of business, and took part in all the Ballantyne *imbroglio*, and Boz wrote a paper on the dispute.

All sorts of odd, out-of-the-way conditions attended the book. It was one of the first that had appeared in the unusual shape of numbers, or instalments, and green covers; to be succeeded by Lever, with his 'Harry Lorrequer' in pink, and Thackeray in yellow. This form has long since gone out. To collect 'Pickwicks' and Pickwickiana requires a scientific education and much deep learning. You must know all 'the points.' Has yours the green cover 'with illustrations,' or 'illustrations by Seymour and Hablot Browne?' Are there all the advertisements—Rowland's Kalydor and the rest—all 'the addresses?' I know of collectors who have a separate cardboard case for each number. Then there are the different 'states' of the plates—the 'Tony Veller' in the vignette; the two Chapters XXVIII.; and a score of other things. A really good, true, and perfect copy is worth a deal of money. The late Frank Marshall's

cost, or was supposed to cost, £100. 'Pickwick' is quoted regularly in the text-books, in Dr Murray's Dictionary, and, stranger still, in a grave legal work, 'Taylor on Evidence,' where Sam's examination is actually given in full.











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